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Navigating Inclusion: Exploring Teacher Experiences and Challenges in Supporting Students with Special Education Needs

Alejandro B. Guavez Jr.*
Graduate School of Education, University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, Las Piñas City, Philippines

Abstract—The study aimed to delve into the experiences of elementary school teachers in the implementation of inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN) in the District of Barotac Nuevo during School Year 2026-2027. In particular, it sought to describe the teachers' views and experiences, highlight the difficulties faced by teachers, and explore the strategies they adopted to overcome the diversity of learners and suggest how inclusive education can be enhanced. It also sought to create KAPIT-BISIG, a proposed support system which will guide stakeholders, school leaders and teachers in the promotion of collaborative and sustainable inclusive education. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and subsequently analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2020) six phase reflexive thematic analysis, a qualitative phenomenological design. Ethical issues were adhered to during the study such as informed consent and confidentiality. Results identified seven main themes. Teachers saw inclusive education as a commitment to equitable supportive learning opportunities for all learners. They indicated, however, that training was minimal, resources are deficient, and that the classes are large, along with little professional development opportunities and little support from parents and administrators. Some of the challenges teachers faced were addressed by using differentiated instruction, visual aids, group activities, peer support and other flexible strategies. They also emphasized patience, compassion, collaboration, and continuous professional growth in supporting learners with SEN. The study concludes that sustainable inclusive education requires continuous teacher development, adequate resources, stronger institutional support, and collaboration among stakeholders. KAPIT-BISIG is proposed as a school-based framework that can strengthen teacher capacity, facilitate sharing of inclusive practices and resources, promote collaborative problem-solving, and coordinate support for learners with SEN, thereby fostering more responsive, equitable, and inclusive learning environments.

***Index Terms*—inclusive education, special education needs (SEN), teacher experiences, phenomenological study, differentiated instruction, professional development, Barotac Nuevo.**

1. Introduction

This section presents the background and context of the study, outlining the research problem and its significance within the relevant field of inquiry. It introduces the central focus of the study and provides an overview of the key issues under investigation. The section further presents the research questions, purpose of the study, scope and delimitations, and the definition of key terms, thereby establishing the foundation for the succeeding sections.

A. Background of the Study

Inclusive education is a key element in a fair learning environment for all pupils. It is backed by international agreements, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), which both highlight the need for quality education for all learners. In spite of these policies, the practice of inclusive education remains challenging in many of the schools, particularly those which do not have sufficient resources. Some issues, like the lack of teacher training, the large number of children in a class and insufficient teaching materials or assistive devices make it difficult for the teacher to fully support children with special learning needs. While there are many studies on inclusive education, there are few studies that have focused on the experiences of teachers in rural and under-resourced communities. For this reason, further understanding is needed in how teachers manage inclusion in schools that did not have teachers who are knowledgeable in the field and have limited support and resources. This study is about the experiences of the elementary school teachers in Barotac Nuevo, a district in the Philippines where inclusive education programs exist, but teachers have not been studied closely.

This study has several significance aspects. First, the Philippine government has adopted policies – like the DepEd Order No. 21, s. Despite the efforts to include pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes between 2006 and 2020, there is limited knowledge of the implementation of these policies in practice. Most of the studies conducted in the Philippines have been directed to policies and broad issues of implementation but few have examined the experiences of teachers in the day-to-day implementation of change. Teachers are very significant in inclusive education as they are the ones who manage the classroom, respond to the needs of the different learners and face the challenges which arise due to limited

*Corresponding author: guavezjr.alejandro@gmail.com

support. Second, research from other countries has indicated that the strategies, creativity and flexibility of teachers are key in achieving inclusive education. The results however do not necessarily mirror the realities of the situation in the Philippines' rural schools, which face additional challenges due to poverty, inadequate facilities and limited resources. Third, there is a strong recommendation for approaches such as Universal Design for Learning and differentiated instruction that can be difficult to implement in schools where there are insufficient materials, training, and support. Therefore, the voices of teachers and their real experiences are important to listen and learn.

The study is intended to fill a significant gap in the literature related to inclusive education with the elementary schools of Barotac Nuevo as the focus of the study. It seeks to expose the experiences of teachers in an area not usually covered by research, to reveal some of the challenges they face, and to make visible some of the ways they attempt to make inclusion in their classrooms a reality. The results of the study can be used to improve the policy, teacher training program and teaching strategy in inclusive education. More importantly, the study can be used to improve the understanding of the possibilities of inclusive education in various local contexts. Ultimately, this study aims to offer practical implications for teachers and to contribute to equal learning opportunities for all learners.

B. Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore how regular elementary school teachers in selected public schools in the District of Barotac Nuevo experience the inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN). It specifically looked into how they promote inclusive education in their classrooms, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to deal with these challenges.

Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do regular elementary school teachers describe their experiences in implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN)?
2. What challenges do teachers encounter in promoting the inclusive education of learners with special educational needs in the classroom?
3. What strategies do teachers use to overcome these challenges and support an inclusive learning environment?
4. What insights from teachers' experiences may help improve inclusive education practices and policies in the district?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what Professional Development Program can be proposed?

C. Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore and understand the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the Barotac Nuevo District in implementing an inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN) during School Year 2026–2027. Specifically, it sought to identify the challenges teachers encounter in addressing the diverse academic, behavioral, social, and learning needs of learners with SEN; describe the strategies and responses they employ to address these challenges; and examine how their experiences influence their personal and professional growth as educators.

Furthermore, the study aimed to identify teachers' proposed ways of strengthening inclusive education practices through improved training, resources, collaboration, and institutional support. Based on the findings, the study proposed KAPIT-BISIG as a school-based support framework intended to strengthen teachers' capacity for inclusive education, facilitate the sharing of effective practices and resources, encourage collaborative problem-solving, and promote coordinated support among teachers, school leaders, parents, and other stakeholders. Ultimately, the study sought to contribute to the development of more responsive, equitable, and sustainable inclusive learning environments for learners with special education needs.

D. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies on the growing body of knowledge on inclusive education, especially the experiences and management of learners with special educational needs (SEN) by regular classroom teachers in public elementary schools of the Philippines. The study focused on the District of Barotac Nuevo to describe the current situation of teachers who provide inclusive education in mainstream classrooms, amidst constraints of limited resources and other contextual issues. The results contributed to gaining a better understanding of teachers' experiences, the obstacles they faced, and how they successfully facilitated inclusive education. Such information can be valuable for developing teacher support systems, for enhancing school policies and for informing professional development initiatives designed to facilitate effective inclusive education in local schools.

Students. There may be indirect benefits for learners with SEN as this study identifies strategies that could contribute to their acceptance, participation and social inclusion in classroom. Thus, the study could contribute in developing a more supportive and inclusive learning environment for them.

Regular Classroom Teachers. This research could be useful to regular classroom teachers who want to gain a deeper insight into others' experiences with learners with SEN. It can also help them think about their own practice, identify shared issues and make use of strategies that can help them enhance classroom management and inclusive education.

Special Education Teachers. The findings may be useful to special education teachers who were not directly involved in the study, as these may help them have greater insight into the experiences and needs of regular classroom teachers. This can support general education and special education teachers to be helping one another in implementing inclusive education of learners with special education needs.

School Administrators. The results of the study can assist school leaders to enhance support systems for teachers through the provision of appropriate resources, training and school-based policies to enhance inclusive education practices.

District Supervisors. The findings in this study might give district supervisors a better understanding of the supports in place, training needs, and classroom contexts that impact the success of inclusive education. Teachers' experiences can be used to inform decision-making regarding planning of capacity building programs, resource allocation, and strengthening implementation of inclusive education policies at the school and district levels.

Future Researchers. This study can be used as a reference for future studies to further explore the understanding of inclusive education, particularly in the Philippine school context.

Policymakers. The study can be used as a foundation or stepping stone for those who are developing or revising laws, programs and policies to address the reality of inclusive education in resource poor public schools.

E. Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to examine the life and problems of public elementary school teachers in the District of Barotac Nuevo in promoting the inclusive education of learners with special educational needs (SEN). It aimed to draw on teachers' practice of inclusion, the challenges that teachers faced in promoting inclusive education and the strategies that they used to facilitate the active involvement of learners with SEN in the classroom's academic and social activities. The study subjects were eight regular elementary school teachers who had experience in dealing with SEN learners. The participants were selected by using purposive sampling, so that it was ensured that the participants had direct and relevant experiences related to inclusive education. This study took place in the selected public elementary schools in the district for SY 2026-2027.

The purpose of this research was to gain insight that will lead to the improvement of school practices and policies concerning inclusive education. It was designed to showcase teachers' experiences, to be able to see the things that are common to teachers' struggles, and to record strategies that might be valuable for other teachers in comparable situations. The data was collected using a semi-structured interview, and thematic analysis was used to gain an understanding of the meaning of the teachers' experiences. The study was confined to the views of regular classroom teachers as neither school administrators, parents, and students were involved. Also, only classroom-based inclusive education was examined, not issues of administrative decision-making.

F. Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined conceptually or operationally based on how they are used in this study.

Experience. Experience refers to something personally lived and directly encountered by an individual. It is understood in its personal dimension and is grounded in the subject's own lived reality (Martinez, 2022). In this study, it refers to the actual experiences of regular teachers who handled children with special educational needs.

General Education Teacher. A general education teacher is a professionally licensed teacher who handles typically developing learners as well as learners with disabilities in an inclusive classroom (DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021). In this study, the term refers to non-special education teachers who have children with special educational needs included in their classes or subjects taught.

Inclusive Education. Inclusive education is the process of integrating individuals with disabilities into regular classrooms and reflects the global commitment to equal educational opportunities as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). In this study, it refers to the acceptance and inclusion of children with special educational needs in regular classrooms in elementary schools in the District of Barotac Nuevo.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand and describe the essence of a particular phenomenon. It focuses on the everyday lived experiences of individuals while setting aside the researcher's prior assumptions about the phenomenon being studied (Delve & Limpaecher, 2022). In this study, it refers to the qualitative research design used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of general education teachers handling children with special educational needs.

Social Inclusion. Social inclusion means that all children learn together in schools that recognize and respond to the diverse needs of students. It involves providing quality education for all through appropriate curricula, school organization, teaching strategies, and use of resources, while also addressing barriers to the presence, participation, and achievement of all students in general education classes (UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2017, as cited in Molina et al., 2021). In this study, it refers to the participation of children with special educational needs in the same classroom environment as regular learners.

Special Educational Needs (SEN). Special educational needs refer to the additional support required by children with physical, cognitive, behavioral, emotional, or developmental challenges that affect their ability to fully participate in the general education curriculum (UNESCO, 2020). In this study, the term refers to children from SPED classes who are enrolled in regular classroom settings together with non-SEN learners.

G. Expected Practical Output

The expected practical output of this study is KAPIT-BISIG, a proposed school-based support framework designed to address the challenges experienced by elementary school teachers in implementing inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN). The framework is grounded in the lived experiences, challenges, strategies, and recommendations shared by the teacher-participants during the study.

KAPIT-BISIG is envisioned as a collaborative and sustainable mechanism that brings together teachers, school heads, parents, learners, and other relevant stakeholders in providing appropriate support for learners with SEN. The framework aims to strengthen teachers' capacity to respond to diverse learning needs by providing opportunities for professional learning, sharing of effective inclusive practices,

development and exchange of instructional resources, collaborative problem-solving, and consultation among stakeholders.

The framework may include key components such as capacity building and professional development, inclusive teaching strategies and resource sharing, collaborative support and consultation, parent and stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and continuous improvement. These components are intended to respond to the identified concerns related to limited teacher training, inadequate resources, large class sizes, limited professional development opportunities, and insufficient support from parents and school administrators.

As a practical output, KAPIT-BISIG may be translated into a school-based implementation guide, professional learning activities, resource-sharing mechanisms, collaborative support sessions, and monitoring tools that schools can adapt according to their context and available resources. It is not intended to replace existing DepEd policies, programs, or interventions but to complement and strengthen their implementation at the school level.

Ultimately, KAPIT-BISIG is expected to provide a structured yet flexible approach for strengthening teacher preparedness, promoting collaboration, improving classroom practices, and coordinating support for learners with SEN. Through collective action and shared responsibility, the framework seeks to contribute to the development of more responsive, equitable, supportive, and sustainable inclusive learning environments in elementary schools.

2. Review of Related Literature and Studies

A. Thematic Synthesis of Literature

This section presents studies and scholarly works related to inclusive education, particularly the role of teachers in supporting learners with special educational needs (SEN) in regular classrooms. It includes literature on social inclusion, teacher experiences, challenges in implementing inclusive practices, and strategies used to support learners with SEN. It also discusses relevant theories, policies, and previous studies that help explain how teachers manage inclusion in school settings.

B. Concept and Dimensions of Social Inclusion in Education

The term "inclusion" is regularly used in the discourse of education but often left undefined. Empirical studies on inclusive education usually take a normative approach, which is based on ideals such as justice and democracy. However, these abstract concepts are sometimes difficult to implement into practice, because their meanings can vary depending on the context (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Since the 1994 Salamanca Declaration by UNESCO, inclusive education has become central as the theme in educational theory, which led to policy reforms to include diverse and disadvantaged learners (Mezzanotte & Calvel, 2023).

Inclusive education uses the diversity as an asset and strength of the learning environment as opposed to a problem. It marks a complete transformation of the current education system where different students are seen as a problem that needs a solution to a situation where diversity is embraced and the needed supports are offered so that all of them can participate equally (Alliance for Inclusive Education, n.d.). In addition, the concept of inclusive education is anchored on the notion of equity, that is, all students, with or without disability and learning difference are given equal opportunity to learn and thrive in a respectful and appreciative atmosphere.

According to the National Education Policy, 2020, education is the most important instrument of social justice and equality which implies the impact on the creation of an inclusive community and society (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020). To do this, educators will have to use new strategies and methods that will meet the needs of individual learners (Glendale School, n.d.).

Over the past few decades, the concept of inclusive education has become important at the international level and is currently supposed to ensure the equality of the opportunity of all learners, regardless of their skills and requirements (Mansur et al., 2023). It means that the inclusion of people with disabilities in the regular classes which has become a global goal of providing equal opportunity as advocated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). This style is all about the tolerance of different students and building empathy and sympathy among the students. Nevertheless, there are still obstacles with lack of proper training, inadequate facilities, poor peer association, inadequate parental engagement and dissuaded policies that usually hinder successful execution. The social constructivism, humanistic approach, and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are the theories that are very important in countering these challenges by encouraging inclusive pedagogical approaches (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024).

The impact of the nature of disability on subjective well-being and social inclusion has been examined in the recent research. As an example, learners with intellectual disabilities and motor disabilities say that they have a better amount of social integration than other learners with autism or attention disorders (Guillemot et al., 2024). Such programs as Special Olympics Unified Schools have proven to be effective in improving on social-emotional skills as well as peer relationships with the help of the joint sport and activities (Yin and Jodl, 2021). These results highlight the importance of peer interaction and organised inclusive programs.

Individualized housing and on-going educator education also assist in social inclusion. Academic and social performance will improve immensely when teachers are ready to address different needs (Chinhara and Sotuku, 2020). This increases the transformational nature of inclusive education towards diversity, tolerance and holistic growth.

Inclusive education is based on the principle of equal access and inclusion where everybody, irrespective of ability, socioeconomic status and cultural affiliation are considered as having equal chances to succeed in mainstream education. Panda, A. (2024) notes that inclusive education implies incorporating students with disabilities in general schools and the learners are provided with proper support in general classes

which are age-appropriate.

Similarly, inclusive approach to Education as per UNEducation (2025) implies that need of every individual is considered and learning and gain is done collectively by all. It recognises that every child is able to learn and that every child has individual peculiarities, interests, abilities and learning requirements. Participation, in turn, implies the promotion of a sense of belonging and agency, whereby the learners are involved in the classroom and learning processes and contribute to them in a meaningful way (UNESCO, 2020).

C. Individual Needs and Adaptations

Research says that inclusive environments that are designed around Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, and culturally responsive practices make a difference in increasing the participation of students with disabilities and students from marginalized communities (Dignath et al., 2022). Furthermore, inclusion is not only an educational imperative, as it is a human rights issue, as it is stressed by international frameworks such as the UNCRPD and Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2020).

The systematic literature review study conducted by Filippou et al, (2025) explores the topic of inclusive policies and practices in higher education where there is a gradual increase in literature research dedicated to this important area from 2001 to 2021. The review synthesizes the findings from 43 articles, which has found that although there is a growing body of literature, large gaps exist, especially around under-represented groups, such as ethnic minorities, women and people with disabilities. The authors stress that inclusive education is a fundamental human right and is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, which calls for providing equitable access to good education to all.

The review identifies key components of effective inclusive practices, including learner-centered curriculums, differentiated teaching strategies, and accessible physical and digital environments. It emphasizes the need for creating a learning environment that supports collaboration and engagement among students, as well as the need for professional development for faculty and staff members to deepen their understanding of inclusive practices. The findings imply that while many higher education institutions have made inroads in transforming their policies into inclusive, there is still a long way to go in terms of being really inclusive.

Moreover, the review recommends a broader research that includes a greater variety of marginalized groups and include a greater range of methodological approaches, especially quantitative research which can inform the issue in a wider way regarding the effectiveness of inclusive practices. The authors propose a framework for inclusive higher education, which can assist policymakers and practitioners in exploring and improving their existing policies and practices for the purposes of eventually creating a more equitable educational landscape. This review is an important source of information to get an understanding of the current situation of inclusion in higher education and of the steps needed to better access and participation for all students (Filippou et al., 2025).

The focus of the study conducted by Iniesto and Bossu (2023) through a systematic literature review is on the themes of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the context of open education. The review synthesizes findings from different studies to find out the extent in which EDI principles have been currently incorporated in open educational resources (OER), and practices (OEP). The authors highlight that EDI is needed to the development of inclusive learning environment to meet the diverse needs of learners. They stress the potential of open education to democratize access to knowledge and educational resources, but that this requires that EDI principles are actively embedded in educational practices.

Inclusive education recognizes the fact that students learn differently with different needs. The study - "Differentiated Instruction: Meeting the Students' Diverse Needs and Uniqueness" by Sari (2023) - investigates the implementation of differentiated instruction of an English classroom at one of the Junior High School in the Eastern Taiwan. The importance of taking into account the diverse needs of students in terms of tailored content, processes and products in teaching is highlighted. Taking some of the key findings, the study brings out the following: Teachers need to be aware of the competency level of the students, ensure that students are acquainted with the instructional methods, and prepare for different kinds of assessments for the same teaching period. The research points out the importance of effective differentiated instruction in helping students to learn vocabulary and to create a more inclusive learning environment, which accommodates the unique background and learning styles of students. By highlighting the process and content of learning, the study argues to change the education through promoting equity and individualization in teaching practices which would ultimately lead to better student engagement and achievement of English language learning.

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the use of adaptive learning technologies has emerged as a transformative force in the industry, and they have been able to provide personalized learning experiences that are customized to the needs of individual students. Wambui (2024) explores the nature of these technologies, benefits and challenges confronting them, and is particularly concerned with the ability of these technologies to leverage the power of machine learning and artificial intelligence to customize individual learning to the unique attributes, behaviors and levels of performance of learners. The research brings to light how adaptive learning systems can help improve educational practices with personalized learning path and assessments to help improve learning outcomes. However, there are also challenges to the implementation of such technologies such as: The need to integrate technology quality in diverse educational settings. The paper concludes with the importance of continuous research to maximize the use of the adaptive learning technology that has a great potential to overcome the longstanding issue of personalization in education and increase the overall student engagement and achievement (Wambui 2024).

The study on the effectiveness of the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in education settings with a

particular interest in their role in promoting inclusivity and diversity is a systematic review and meta-analysis study conducted by Almeqdad et al. (2023). The research evaluated 13 empirical peer-reviewed research articles that were published between 2015-2021 and found that UDL principles were used in a variety of educational contexts in K-12 and higher education in six different countries. The results revealed a large overall effect size of 3.56, however, there was a great deal of heterogeneity in the studies. This research highlights the potential of UDL for improving student learning outcomes, especially when implemented through professional development programs or targeted interventions, while also pointing to the need for further exploration into the wider applicability and effectiveness of UDL in a variety of educational settings (Almeqdad et al., 2023).

The combination of adaptive learning technology, personalized feedback and interactive AI tools has been shown to improve student engagement in educational settings to a significant extent. Research shows that adaptive learning systems have the capacity to customize educational content to suit individual student needs and, hence, to promote a more personalized learning experience to encourage cognitive and emotional engagement (Yaseen et al., 2025). Personalized feedback mechanisms are another way to contribute to this engagement in that providing feedback to students in a timely and specific way can help them identify their own strengths and areas for improvement and lead to students taking an active role in their learning process (Yaseen et al., 2025). Additionally, interactive AI tools can enable real-time interactions and support to make students interact with the content on a deeper level and work collaboratively with their peers (Yaseen et al., 2025). However, using these technologies are limited by the digital literacy of the students as those who have better digital skills will be able to harness the usefulness of these tools which will lead to better engagement and learning outcome (Yaseen et al., 2025). This throws a big light about why it's important to incorporate digital literacy training in educational programs that can help maximize the benefits of technological advancements to promote student engagement.

Providing appropriate support and accommodation to help students to be successful in the general education setting is crucial. The relationship between student engagement and academic achievement has been the focus of educational research, and many studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between the two. A meta-analysis combined results from 69 independent studies of 196473 participants and found a moderately strong correlation between overall student engagement and academic achievement. The results of this analysis drew special attention to the fact that behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement all correlated positively with academic success, though the strength of these relationships varied depending on factors including the method of reporting engagement, cultural values and gender. Specifically, the study found that other-reported measures of engagement demonstrated higher correlations with academic achievement than did self-reported measures, indicating that other-reported measures of engagement may more accurately reflect academic performance of the students. Additionally, cultural context was an important factor with the Eastern students showing more significant correlations between engagement and achievement than their Western counterparts, most likely a result of differences in educational practices and values. These findings indicate the importance of cultivating student engagement as a way of improving academic outcomes and the need for educators to take into consideration the context when implementing engagement strategies (Roy, 2023).

The integration of technology in education has become more vital in improving learning and the development of essential skills for the 21st century. Research has shown that the use of technology works as a catalyst of innovation and allows educators to implement student-centred pedagogies that accommodate multiple learning styles and encourage active engagement. Digital tools, multimedia resources, and interactive platforms are making collaborative learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills easier, and have also made information far more accessible than ever before, outside of the confines of the traditional classroom. Furthermore, technology fosters digital literacy, giving students the skills they need to navigate and critically evaluate the vast amount of information on the internet. However, self-sufficient implementation of technology in education also has its complications such as unequal access, potential distracts, and the chance of cyberbullying. Addressing these issues is of paramount importance to ensuring that technology is used to maximal advantage to the educational experience, and that it will ultimately help to prepare learners for success in a rapidly evolving digital landscape (Kalyani, L. K. 2024).

D. Ethical and Legal Framework of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is a value that is grounded in the human rights of education for all people. Its origins can be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement of 1950's and 1960's and particularly highlighted by the landmark Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education (1954), which said that "separate. . . . facilities are inherently unequal." This principle, which was first used against racial segregation, was later invoked by proponents of children with disabilities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The efforts of parents in Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania resulted in legal victories that brought about the dismantling of the exclusion of children with disabilities from public schools until the law was ultimately enacted in 1975 under the name of Public Law 94-142 to become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The primary objective of IDEA is to educate children with disabilities in conjunction with their non-disabled peers, to promote equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (20 U.S.C. S 1400(C)(1). The law's least restrictive environment (LRE) provision makes it so that all children with disabilities are entitled to an appropriate education in inclusive settings as much as possible (New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education, n.d.).

Assessment techniques are an important part of inclusive education and it can offer valuable insights into the progress

and learning needs of students. These assessments help educators make informed decisions about educational placements and instructional strategies (Pradhan & Gochhayat, 2023). Over the decades, the concept of inclusive education has undergone considerable changes from segregated educational settings to integrated and inclusive education that acknowledges the diversity of all learners. Tümkaya, Çetinbaş, Merk (2024) traced such a historical evolution in United Kingdom, and showed how inclusive education stemmed from the heightened awareness of human rights and social equity. Similarly, Bhatia and Rinkey (2024) presented a global view of the move away from exclusionary practices to inclusive frameworks, which highlighted the influence of international advocacy, pedagogical innovations, and policy reforms on educational discourse today. These developments have contributed to making it important to see inclusive education both as a pedagogical movement and a human rights imperative.

The philosophical and legal basis for inclusive education is based on important international declarations and national legislation. The Salamanca statement of 1994 is one of the most influential global frameworks which recommends that schools should be inclusive for all children, irrespective of physical, intellectual, social, emotional or linguistic differences (UNESCO, 2024). This inclusive vision was further strengthened with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which declares the right of persons with disabilities to access inclusive quality and free education on an equal basis with others. These documents have provided the foundation for many countries to draw up their own policies related to inclusive education and legal requirements.

In the Philippine context, the idea of inclusive education is supported with several legislative measures. Republic Act No. 7277 or Magna Carta for Disabled Persons for the rehabilitation, self-development and integration of persons with disabilities in the mainstream of society, including access to education. Additionally, Republic Act No. 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 highlights inclusive and learner-centered education as a tenet in the implementation of the K to 12 curriculum. These legal instruments reflect the corresponding country's commitment to the global inclusive education agenda and constitute a legal framework for providing for the accommodation of learners with special education needs (SEN) in regular school settings.

Understanding the conceptual differences between integration, mainstreaming, and inclusion is important to understanding and evaluating inclusive practices. While integration and mainstreaming often mean that learners with disabilities are brought to learn in general education environments, frequently without any significant modifications to the curriculum or environment. Whereas, inclusion goes a step further by restructuring educational systems to truly be responsive and adaptive to the needs of all students (Molina et al., 2021). Inclusion focuses more on meaningful participation, accessibility and equity rather than being physically present in the classroom nor the importance of adopting comprehensive and flexible strategies to create inclusive classrooms that tailor to the unique needs of every child Hidayah (2025).

E. Special Education Needs (SEN): Different Categories & Characteristics

Special Education Needs (SEN) can be broadly defined as a variety of challenges to cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioural development. Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) including dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, often struggle with the development of executive functions, especially in those functions such as working memory and inhibition (Bhalla & Imran 2025). Emotional disturbance on the other hand is a condition that is characterized by emotional and behavioral challenges, and it affects a child's ability to learn and function effectively in the classroom (Positive Action, 2015). Additionally, as noted by The Ohio State University (n.d.), students with sensory disabilities such as those who are blind, visually impaired, deaf or hearing impaired have in the classroom, often brought with their auxiliaries and adaptive equipment (e.g., dog, cane, interpreter, Type-N-Speak). By providing them with the necessary support, educators can ensure that they all have an equal opportunity to succeed. Supporting diverse learners is more than providing additional support and it's about finding ways to adapt your teaching methods to make sure that learning is accessible and interesting to each student (London College of Teachers. (n.d.).

Within the inclusive educational environment, there are some disabilities that are seen more frequently than others. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that is the result of differences in the brain. It is mostly characterized by difficulties in social communication and interaction, and restricted or repetitive behaviors and interests. Individuals with ASD may also have unusual patterns of learning, movement or attention. While some of these characteristics can be found in people who do not have ASD, for those with the disorder, these characteristics have a great effect on their day-to-day lives. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is significantly comorbid with ASD in about 21% of cases and coexists with learning disabilities, conduct disorders and other developmental challenges (Young et al., 2020). Students with an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) generally have lower academic achievement and social functioning than their peers without an attention deficit disorder (DuPaul et al., 2023). Emotional and behavioral disorders have the potential to be disruptive to learning both internally and externally, but the right behavioral interventions and structures-including behavior intervention plans for these students-can be effective in helping them to be supported in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, students with hearing and visual impairments need special pedagogical strategies and assistive technologies to fully participate in the classroom activities (Yenduri et al., 2023).

The educational implications of SEN are different for different categories. The effects of classroom environments on student participation and student achievement are well-documented. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is linked to

inappropriate sensory processing and attentional deficits which can result in difficulties in successful educational material access in these settings. These symptoms may go some way toward explaining why intellectual ability and academic performance are not aligned in students with ASD (Mallory & Keehn, 2021). Research has shown that inclusive environments designed well can have a significant impact on the social skill and engagement of students with ASD; however, if these environments are not properly implemented students with ASD may be excluded or traumatized (Rohwer, 2024). ADH has problems with concentration and self-discipline; according to research in early childhood and the higher education sector, careful classroom planning and inclusive pedagogy have been shown to improve levels of attention and confidence (Omunda, 2021). Learning disabilities, including dyslexia and dyscalculia, can be effectively combated with the help of assistive technology that enhances academic performance and promotes independence in the inclusive higher education environment (Vincent et al., 2024). Lastly, students with emotional and behavioral disorders are in need of constant behavioral support frames and mental health services since unguided emotional or behavioral issues may result in social isolation, underachievement in academics, and high dropout risk (Aspire Day School, 2023).

Therefore, it is important to have a good understanding of the categories and characteristics of SEN in order to develop effective educational strategies that support inclusivity and the diverse needs of all learners.

F. Teachers' Role and Perspective of Inclusion

Teachers play a key role in making inclusive education a success, as they have an important impact on how a student perceives themselves and their peers. Their jobs aren't only to teach; they are to create an environment where all of their students learn. According to Lindner et al. (2022), teachers are involved as facilitators of social interactions, mediators of conflicts and as advocates of inclusive practices. A supportive and welcoming environment in the classroom is necessary, since it enables students to express themselves without fear or anxiety, encourages open communication, and creates a mutual respect and understanding between a variety of students (Glendale School, n.d.).

Inclusive teaching practices seek to address the goals of both increasing academic performance and increasing social cohesiveness by having equal access to learning opportunities. This involves having well-constructed lesson plans that cater to disparate learning styles and needs of students. For example, educators can incorporate visual aids, hands-on activities and group discussions to ensure that all learners are engaged and supported (Glendale School, n.d.).

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework is one way to help teachers design flexible and inclusive learning experiences by meeting the needs of diverse students and reducing barriers to learning. It focuses on the use of multimodal means of representation, action & expression, and engagement to make learning accessible and enjoyable for all students (Saborio and Rojas, 2024). Including students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) has wider implications in terms of school environments. Attitudes of teachers toward inclusion usually differ according to the severity and nature of the disability. A body of research suggests that educators are more accepting of the inclusion of students with mild disabilities in general and show greater ambivalence when confronted with more severe and behavioral challenges. This points to the need for specific professional development and institutional support (Wahsheh, 2024). In general, classmates of students with SEN have either neutral or positive outcomes from inclusive education, especially with respect to social development and academic achievement. This positive impact is often ascribed to the greater empathy and awareness that is developed within the inclusive settings. Family perceptions also support the concept of effective inclusion resulting in better social integration, emotional well-being, and overall satisfaction at school for all students (Simon, et. al., 2023).

Furthermore, teachers have an important role to play in helping to promote respect for diversity through their modeling of inclusive behaviors and through their active efforts to identify and remove bias in the classroom. Encouraging students to work together in a variety of groups during projects helps to create social bonds and a sense of camaraderie between students.

Students with disabilities need tailored support and teachers can address the needs by differentiating instruction and providing individualized support. Assistive technologies, such as screen readers and speech-to-text software, can greatly improve access to learning materials. Additionally, the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) ensures that instruction is tailored to each student's unique strengths and challenges, promoting academic success and personal growth (Viner, et. al., 2022).

Recent studies have been increasingly concerned with teachers attitude towards inclusive education and especially with students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Teachers have been known to be the key drivers in the implementation of inclusive education as they work within schools and classroom, which are critical delivery points (Daria et al., 2024). Their attitudes, preparedness and practices have a major effect on the experiences of students, and how they respond to the inclusion of a child with SEN can affect the success or otherwise of the inclusion process.

According to Lindner et al. (2022), the positive teacher attitudes and inclusive practices lead to better integration of pupils with SEN. Alsolami & Vaughan (2023) further stress on these attitudes being influenced by training, experience and institutional support. Teachers who work with special education professionals and participate in ongoing profession development are more prepared to build inclusive environments.

Lindner et al. (2022) pointed out that multiple studies have suggested a significant correlation between relations with teachers and classmates with different well-being aspects. The importance of student-teacher relationship for well-being was also confirmed by Zainullah & Riniati (2023) who did interviews with teaching and support staff, as well as students

and parents. Positive relationships between parents and teachers improve student well-being and inclusion with studies describing the link between emotional support, adequate accommodations, and effective communication between families and schools has a significant impact on inclusion independent of socioeconomic background.

One of the most important results observed from the study by Beltran et al. (2025) is the generally positive attitude teachers have towards the concept of inclusion. This is in line with the global trends for education where there is a focus on the importance of creating diverse and inclusive learning environments. However, results of Gal et al (2025) research also points out an important gap between theoretical supports for inclusion and teacher's practical dilemma of effectively employing inclusive practices, and this dilemma has been highlighted in recent studies. These findings are corroborated by Masongsong et al. (2023), who stated that many teachers are uncomfortable managing diverse learning needs.

Therefore, professional development needs to focus beyond instructional strategies, but on techniques for creating socially inclusive climates as well.

Teacher attitudes to inclusion are shaped by a combination of individual, professional and situational factors. A meta-analysis by Boyle et al, (2020) indicated that self-efficacy, extensive training in inclusive practices, and previous positive experience with students with disabilities were significant predictors of more positive attitudes toward inclusion. A similar meta-analytic study in 40 countries found mid-range cognitive and emotional appraisals among teachers with special education teachers and pre service teachers showing significantly more positive attitudes than regular education and in-service teachers - underscoring the influence of training stage and specialization.

Teachers who have positive attitudes towards inclusion also show greater levels of self-efficacy and they implement inclusive strategies more effectively. In a study of the self-efficacy of Australian educators (208 in total), those who believed in the efficacy of inclusion had significantly higher self-efficacy in teaching diverse learners (Woodcock et al., 2023). This connection is highlighted by an Israeli meta-analysis which revealed that professional development as well as practical experience in the classroom were essential components to developing self-efficacy and inclusive practice (Boyle et al., 2020). Other research only supports that the attitudes of support are translated into actual adaptations that support access and participation for students with special needs (Woodcock et al., 2023; Boyle et al., 2020) by including collaborative planning, differentiation, and modifications to the classroom.

Teacher attitudes are also quite different from one cultural and geographical context to another. A cross-national study in Greece, the UK, the USA, Malaysia and Turkey had identified cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions of attitudes and found, for example, that the Greek teachers had the most positive attitudes across the board, and that the teachers in the USA and UK had rather less positive ones (Charitaki et al. 2022). In Saudi Arabia, middle school teachers showed generally neutral opinions towards inclusion; however, professional training proved to be a major differentiating factor, with teachers with an inclusion training showing significantly more positive attitudes (Aldosari, 2022). A study carried out in 2024 in Spain found for the most part positive attitudes both among pre-service and in-service teachers, although mixed responses were obtained in more comprehensive reviews indicating that differences in context, methodologies and policies drive differences in attitudes (Lacruz-Peirez, 2021).

Resistance to inclusion can often be brought on by the lack of self-efficacy, stress or support. A study in Saudi Arabia highlighted the fact that older teachers tended to be less receptive, in this case a lack of resources, training, contributed heavily to resistance (Aldosari, 2022). On the other hand, positive engagement through professional development that combines theory with practical experience has been shown to increase acceptance by teachers and make it easier for them to adapt in the classroom (Boyle et al., 2020). In China, some initial reluctance among some educators was replaced by more positive attitudes with an increasing experience with inclusive pedagogy; however, teachers - like those in Australia - remained cautious when they perceived a lack of quality or support (Luo & Li, 2024). These studies show that acceptance and adaptation are dependent on continued training, systemic support and reflective practice.

To sum it up, teachers play a role in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Their attitudes, preparedness and practices play an important role in determining the experiences of students with SEN and the success of inclusive practices as a whole. Ongoing professional development, meaningful relationships, and a commitment to promoting inclusive environments are essential to promoting the educational experiences of all learners.

G. Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development

Pre-service teacher education programs often include theoretical course work around inclusive pedagogy; however, many programs do not do a good job of preparing candidates for the real-world implementation. Mazzuki (2022) concluded that while Tanzanian pre-service teachers understood basic concepts, they had little practical experience and showed some concern about making the connection between theory and classroom practice. Similarly, in the UAE, the findings showed that even though 79% of pre-service teachers have participated in several practicum courses, close to half reported little to no experience in working with students with special educational needs (SEND) and a majority felt under-prepared for inclusive settings (Alhammadi, 2024). Canadian research underscored the importance of hands-on application, peer collaboration and mentorship in practice placements in increasing inclusive teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers (Fairbrother et al, 2025). In the Philippines, Lualhati (2022) found collaborative teaching experiences and exposure to inclusive strategies made pre-service teachers more ready and had a positive attitude towards the inclusive teaching strategies.

Ongoing professional development (PD) is key to maintaining inclusive competence of educators. A survey done by Stingo, J. (2024) of teachers found that teachers who had

received special education coursework reported feeling more comfortable in providing differentiated instruction, working with parents and using assistive technology. However, even so, they still reported significant gaps in their practical implementation suggesting the need for continuous professional development (CPD) to bridge the gap between theory and daily teaching practice. In the article, Research by Arias-Pastor et al in Frontiers in Education, the role of self-efficacy, prior experience and structured CPD in fostering the readiness for inclusive education in secondary teacher trainees was highlighted.

Despite these training efforts several competency gaps exist. Studies from Tanzania and the UAE revealed a lack of confidence by pre-service teachers in planning for SEN, adapting lesson plans and integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms (Mazzuki, 2022). In Kuwait, Alazemi and Larkins (2025) stated that despite having their course work completed, many of the teachers felt that they were not prepared in key aspects such as differentiated instruction, use of assistive technology, facilitation of social skills and family collaboration. These gaps highlight the need for the urgent improvement of the practical aspects of teacher training programs.

Mentorship and peers working together play a key role in the development of inclusive teaching skills. Canadian findings highlight the importance of mastery experiences and working with other colleagues in authentic settings in order to develop self-efficacy (Fairbrother, 2024). Internationally, studies in Frontiers in Education concluded that collaborative learning communities enable trainee teachers to adopt inclusive pedagogy and use it effectively with classroom practices, and to unlearn their assumptions (Arias-Pastor et al., 2023). While traditional mentoring is of value, peer and near-peer models - using the power of shared experiences - provide the potential for scalable support and reflective opportunities for both beginning and in-service teachers (Williams, et al 2024).

Lastly, although pre-service teacher education programs help to equip pre-service teachers with basic knowledge on inclusive pedagogy, there is a pressing need for increased training in practical skills and continuous professional development. By focusing on mentorship, peer collaboration, and bridging the gap between theory and practice, educators can be better prepared to meet the diverse needs of all students in inclusive classrooms.

H. Instructional Strategies for Inclusive Classrooms

According to Chad, F. (2025) Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are underlying frameworks in inclusive pedagogy to meet the diversity of the needs of all learners. DI puts emphasis on differentiating content, process, and product to meet students based on their readiness, interests, and learning profile. In contrast, UDL is a proactive method of designing curricula to provide multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression in order to put the fewest number of barriers between each learner and the curriculum. Research suggests that DI and UDL are complementary - that UDL is helpful for overall design of lessons and DI uses flexible grouping and ongoing assessment to cater for individual needs. DI advances the UDL principles of engagement and expression by delivering tiered tasks and different learning modalities.

Assistive technologies (ATs) are a very important aspect of supporting students with diverse learning needs. These technologies comprise low tech tools, such as graphic organizers, to high tech software, such as text to speech applications. ATs enhance UDL by accounting for the differences among students without singling out students. In the field of higher education, a new breed of technologies such as AI-driven technologies, Metaverse environments are available to offer adaptive supports for students with specific learning difficulties. Real life examples such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking for students with dysgraphia and Auri systems for hearing accessibility illustrate how ATs can support both engagement and equity in the learning environment (Wells, 2024), and

Inclusive classrooms also make use of strategies that promote community, autonomy and positive behavior. Recommended practices include flexible seating arrangements, student-student sharing of roles, self-regulation areas and student structures with routines and visual checklists. Community-building activities are crucial to supporting the classroom environment in a positive way (Kumari, 2025). Additionally, student response systems, including clickers, and interactive whiteboards promote formative assessment and student interaction, making it easier to group students for differentiation and improving student engagement (Sulaiman, et al, 2024).

Finally, combining DI, UDL and collaborative teaching, assistive technologies as well as community-building strategies, are part of a powerful framework for inclusive classrooms. These instructional strategies do not only cater for the diverse learning needs, but they also lead to an equitable and engaging learning environment among all students (Priyadharsini & Mary, 2024).

I. Support Systems and the School Environment

American University School of Education (2020) stresses the importance of special education teachers in creating an inclusive classroom. Resource teachers, teaching assistants (TAs), and special education (SPED) coordinators have important roles to play in meeting the educational needs of students with special educational needs (SEN). Resource rooms provide for small group or individualized instruction that relates to the individualized education plan (IEP) of the student and is targeted to areas, such as homework completion and behavioral goals. Research suggests that not only does this model improve academic achievement and self-confidence, but it also tends to be preferred by a large number of students with SEN over push-in support models.

Effective leadership in the school is critical to creating inclusive environments. Transformational and distributed styles of leadership, which is characterized by intentional vision, inclusive development of policies, and allocation of resources to achieve strategic goals, facilitate systemic changes that support all learners (Jordan & Kilag, 2024). In the Philippines,

principals in outstanding inclusive schools who foster a collaborative leadership style have made a significant difference in terms of equity and trust, while also increasing teacher engagement (Osias et al., 2023). Leaders who demonstrate the core values of inclusion and build levels of relational trust empower staff to collaboratively enact meaningful inclusion).

According to Cutillas, et al (2023) the physical infrastructure and the classroom layout are also instrumental in promoting inclusivity. Accessible design features, i.e. ramps, flexible seating, sensory areas, clear routines, and visual supports limit barriers and increase student autonomy. Physical environments that are set up for flexibility and sensory regulation allow for easier transitions and engagement of students with a variety of SEN.

Inclusive schools understand that being a center that bridges students, families and the greater community resources is important. Leaders who develop partnerships with therapists, local health and social services and family support networks respond to the complex needs of students and help decrease marginalization (Deroncele-Acosta & Ellis 2024). Schools that employ family and community partnership models, including coordinators that help to facilitate access to external services, strengthen not only inclusion, but community engagement as well (Little, n.d.).

A joint effort by resource teachers, teaching assistants and effective school leadership are critical factors to making inclusive educational environments a reality. By fostering supportive infrastructures and community partnerships, schools can better address the diverse needs of all students, promoting equitable access to education and fostering a sense of belonging in the community.

J. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Inclusive Education

Despite the rise in awareness and policy development on inclusive education, there are still significant barriers to social inclusion. Key challenges are large class sizes, absence of teaching aides, lack of individual resources and competing curriculum demands (UNESCO, 2020). In the Philippines for example, despite the support from the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 21, s. 2020 on inclusive education, infrastructure gaps and cultural attitudes still prevent the successful implementation of inclusive education (Javier M., 2023).

Access to the services for students with disabilities is still not equitable. Jeon et al. (2025), found gaps in healthcare and community services were identified for children with disabilities in terms of eligibility and service delivery. Double discrimination (as a result of both disability and social disadvantage) further limits access to a quality education and inclusion.

Teacher-student relationships and accommodations are at the heart of the well-being and inclusion (Coristine, 2022). However, strict eligibility criteria and limited classifications of disability make it difficult for people to get access to the services they need (Bani Odeh & Lach, 2024). Integrated, context-sensitive service delivery is necessary in order to meet the unique needs of each of the learners and their families (Pankewicz et al., 2020).

According to Tarraya, (2023) teachers are often stretched thin because of high student-to-teacher ratios, large amounts of paperwork, and the need to address the diverse needs within one classroom all at once. In Pakistan, educators report both dealing with classes of more than 30 pupils, many with complex needs and an increase in their workloads of paperwork and administrative duties without a matching increase in non-teaching hours, resulting in significant stress (Kanwal et al, 2023). One teacher explained how difficult it is to create two different lesson plans for Year 1 and Year 7 within the same classroom, which can only be done with additional support (Deroncele-Acosta and Ellis 2024). Similar challenges in Africa reveal that single teachers are sometimes responsible for 40-80 students, which makes it nearly impossible to pay attention to the specific students with developmental disabilities (Genovesi et al., 2024).

Lack of funding, resources and institutional support has added to these challenges. Only 11% of the Principals in Australia felt adequately resourced, with many schools adopting substantial funds to meet the basic needs like school aides and professional development (Martin S., 2024). Globally, teachers say they are unprepared because of a lack of proper pre-service and in-service training (often times they describe their training as "short" or "meaningless") and because they lack the on-site support teams to help them implement inclusion (Genovesi et al., 2024; MDPI, 2024). A study in Swaziland affirmed that poorly qualified teachers and scattered professional development affect the quality of teaching and the resistances to inclusion (Jury et al. 2023).

Beyond the challenge of logistics, teachers are faced with tremendous emotional burdens. Many report fear of failure due to the possibility of unsuccessful inclusion that can have a negative impact on all students, and feel isolated in a lack of institutional support (MDPI, 2024). In low-resource schools, informal support networks are often created by educators to help them cope, but it has been noted that in their school, educators are still experiencing emotions strain as a result of the lack of external help (Gavade et al., 2023). Discrimination and cultural burdens are also heavily felt by culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) teachers who are often subjected to racism, overworking, and emotional exhaustion (Bottiani, et al, 2020).

According to Babik & Gardner (2021,) negative beliefs and cultural misconceptions about disability compound the barrier to being inclusive. Teachers across a range of settings say they do not have the cultural knowledge and confidence to support students from other cultures (Emerald Insight, 2023). Students with disabilities can be perceived as burdens who require extra preparation and modification of lesson plans - pressures that cause some teachers to lobby for special rather than inclusive settings (Robellos et al., 2024). Teacher biases are also a factor in the disproportionate identification of disabilities, especially for students of color (Morgan H., 2020).

The challenges facing teachers in carrying out inclusive

education are multifaceted and include logistical, emotional and cultural dimensions. Addressing these barriers requires systems-level changes, sufficient resources and ongoing professional development to help educators create truly inclusive classrooms.

K. Importance of Understanding Lived Experiences

Lived experience is the first-hand information and understanding that people develop through their personal experiences with different facets of life, especially regarding identity, culture and social issues (de Castro, 2025). According to Feit (2024), it involves the special knowledge offered by people who have been directly impacted by certain health problems. Understanding of lived experiences is important for several reasons mostly because the people who have faced a situation can fully understand the intricacies and challenges of managing it. As Subramaniam (2021) notes, if we haven't lived the life we can't really understand what someone has gone through and we can't judge them by the same standards that we hold ourselves to.

Phenomenological approaches have allowed researchers to learn about profound and subtle aspects of inclusion through the eyes of those directly involved in the experience. Seetharaman et al, (2025) postulates that understanding lived experiences translates into more sympathetic and responsive educational policies. This approach makes a strong point on the importance of listening to and being able to value the voices of teachers and peers, which is essential in promoting practices of inclusion, especially in local contexts like the one in Barotac Nuevo in Iloilo.

By prioritizing lived experiences, educators and policymakers can gain a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by students with diverse needs. This understanding can help to shape more effective teaching strategies, support systems, and policies for inclusion that truly reflect the realities of those affected. Ultimately, acknowledging and appreciating lived experiences is part of creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment, where all students feel understood, supported, and empowered to succeed.

L. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical bases of this study are three theories which complement each other, namely Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986). Taken together, these theories can offer a holistic perspective on the experiences of elementary school teachers as they work to facilitate inclusive education for students with special education needs (SEN). Combined, the theories account for the influence of the learner's immediate setting, social relationships, teaming with colleagues, personal views, and institutional support on teachers' inclusive

These views also serve as the theoretical framework for the proposed school-based collaborative support framework of the study, KAPIT-BISIG.

M. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) suggests that the development of human beings is affected by various environmental systems which interact with each other (Guy-Evans, 2024). These include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. It is a theory that states the person can never be fully understood without reference to the social and environmental contexts in which they operate.

Experiences of teachers in the application of inclusive education as referred to in this study are not only determined by individual knowledge and skills, but also by various systems around them. On the microsystem level, teachers have the most direct contact with learners, colleagues, parents and school leaders. At mesosystem level these interrelationships can either help or hinder their responses to learners with SEN. The exosystem involves school policies, professional development opportunities, availability of resources, and administrative decisions which may indirectly impact teachers' classroom practices. On the macrosystem level, the understanding and implementation of inclusive education is influenced by national education policies, cultural beliefs and societal expectations of inclusion. The chronosystem acknowledges change over time such as the teachers' increasing experiences, policy changes, and changing practices in inclusive education.

This theory is relevant to the current research as participants might face difficulties beyond the classroom. The broader educational context has an impact on limited training, lack of resources, large classes and lack of institutional and parental support. Inclusive education therefore needs support that is not only at the individual teacher level, but in interconnected systems.

N. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

The Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky (1978) suggests that learning and development are the result of social interaction, language, collaboration and involvement in culturally meaningful activities. A key feature of the theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which is the range of difficulties or learning abilities, that a learner can currently do on their own and the range of what they can do with the help and guidance from someone else. This theory applies to inclusive education insofar as learners with SEN may need different types of support, scaffolding, peer support and differentiated instructions.

Teachers act as facilitators making adjustments in teaching as per learners' ability and give appropriate support to ensure meaningful participation of learners in class activities. Peer-assisted learning, collaborative activities, visual supports, differentiated instruction and guided practice are examples of sociocultural learning.

The theory also emphasizes collaboration amongst teachers and stakeholders. Professional interaction and mentoring or consultation for teachers could help them as well as sharing of successful inclusive practices. In this way inclusive education is not only a matter of the individual classroom but a socially produced process of learning from each other between teachers

and stakeholders.

Vygotsky's theory is useful for the current study because it was used to explain the importance of the teachers' emphasis on collaboration, flexibility, peer support, and differentiated approaches in responding to learners with varying needs. It also helps build up the capacity of KAPIT-BISIG as a forum for shared learning, professional collaboration and exchange of strategies and resources.

O. Social cognitive theory (Bandura)

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) states that human behavior is the product of the interaction of three factors: personal factors, behavior, and the environment. A significant concept of the theory is self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully perform a particular task. Teachers with a greater sense of efficacy to meet the needs of diverse learners may be more likely to make adjustments, try new ideas, persevere when something goes wrong, and find new ways to address issues that occur in the classroom.

The theory could apply to the current study because the teacher's confidence and competence in the practice of inclusive education could be linked to their training, past experiences, resources, and colleagues and administration support in the school. Through professional development, observing effective practice, working collaboratively with colleagues and having a positive experience with learners with SEN, teachers might gain confidence in their inclusive practice.

Observational learning is also important in Bandura's theory. Knowledge and skills can be acquired through other teachers seeing what they do, through exchange of experiences and by participating in professional learning groups. This reinforces the value of mentoring, peer working together and sharing of good practice in school.

Social Cognitive Theory offers a foundation for enhancing teacher self-efficacy through opportunities to learn, peer support, collaborative problem-solving, and opportunities to share and observe effective inclusive practices in relation to KAPIT-BISIG. Improving teachers' confidence and sense of competence and effectiveness may help to ensure inclusive classroom practices are more consistent and responsive.

The three theories are complimentary in the description of teachers' experiences in the implementation of inclusive education. The Ecological

Systems Theory, as developed by Bronfenbrenner, emphasizes the influence of the environment, the Sociocultural Theory, as developed by Vygotsky, emphasizes social interaction and collaboration, and the Social Cognitive Theory, as developed by Bandura, focuses on teachers' beliefs, experiences and capabilities. They all present a view of inclusive education as the product of the interplay between the environmental elements, social connections, and the attitudes and capacities of the teachers. These perspectives help to inform understanding of teachers' experiences and challenges in supporting children with SEN, and the importance of their role in inclusive education as a shared responsibility of teachers, schools, families and others.

P. Conceptual Framework

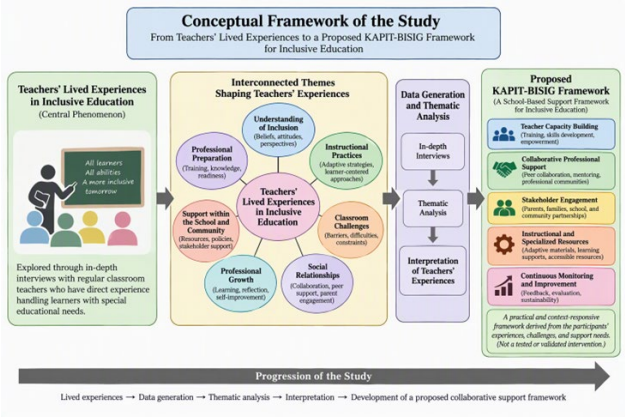


Fig. 1.

The conceptual framework of the study shows how teachers' lived experiences in implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN) contributes to the development of the proposed school-based support framework. The study rests on the assumption that teachers' experiences are influenced by the interplay of teachers' knowledge about inclusion, teacher preparation, teachers' instructional practices, classroom problems, social relationships, teacher development, and school and community support.

The teachers' lived experience of inclusive education is the central phenomenon of this study, and this is the starting point for the framework. In-depth interviews with regular classroom teachers who had first-hand experience in addressing students with special educational needs were conducted to explore these experiences. The narrative of the participants itself constituted the main data source to gain insights into how inclusive education is lived and put into practice in real classroom situations.

The interconnected themes provide the basis for the interpretation of teachers' experiences. The framework recognizes that inclusive education involves an ongoing process in which teachers understand learner diversity, respond through adaptive practices, address classroom barriers, develop professionally, and seek support from other stakeholders.

The final component of the framework is the proposed KAPIT-BISIG Framework, which is derived from the participants' expressed experiences, challenges, and support needs. The framework emphasizes teacher capacity building, collaborative professional support, stakeholder engagement, instructional and specialized resources, and continuous monitoring and improvement. It is intended as a practical school-based response to the conditions identified in the findings and is not presented as a tested or validated intervention.

Overall, the conceptual framework demonstrates the progression of the study from lived experiences, data generation, thematic analysis, and interpretation toward the development of a proposed collaborative support framework. It provides a visual and conceptual representation of how the participants' experiences inform a context-responsive approach to strengthening inclusive education.

Q. Research Gap

Inclusive education has gained increasing attention as an approach to ensuring equitable access to quality education for learners with diverse abilities and learning needs. Existing studies have documented the experiences of teachers in implementing inclusive education and have identified recurring concerns such as limited teacher preparation, inadequate instructional resources, large class sizes, insufficient administrative support, and difficulties in addressing diverse learner needs.

Previous research has also highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction, collaboration, professional development, and positive teacher attitudes in creating inclusive learning environments. These studies provide valuable evidence that teachers play a central role in the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature focuses on teachers' challenges, attitudes, preparedness, or competencies as separate concerns. There is limited qualitative research that brings together teachers' lived experiences, challenges, responses, coping strategies, and proposed solutions to provide a more holistic understanding of how inclusive education is experienced and practiced at the elementary school level. Based on the literature and studies reviewed, the content is very relevant to the current research as it gives a general idea of the realities, problems and needs of SEN learners in inclusive education.

Past research has always reported the importance of the role of teachers in setting up inclusive learning environments, and their effectiveness in this regard, is dependent on various factors such as their preparation, resources available, professional knowledge, classroom conditions, and support from school and community actors. The results will be a significant base in discussing the experiences of the elementary school teachers in the District of Barotac Nuevo.

There is therefore a need for context-specific qualitative evidence that can inform responsive interventions and support mechanisms appropriate to the local setting.

Third, while previous studies commonly recommend teacher training, resource provision, collaboration, and stronger institutional support, fewer studies translate teachers' expressed needs and lived experiences into a context-responsive and school-based practical framework. Recommendations are often presented as general implications without specifying how teachers, school heads, parents, and other stakeholders can work together in a systematic and sustainable manner. This creates a practical gap between identifying the problems experienced by teachers and developing a structured mechanism for addressing those problems.

The present study addresses these gaps by using a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in the District of Barotac Nuevo during School Year 2026–2027. It examines not only the challenges teachers encounter in implementing an inclusive education for learners with SEN but also the strategies they use, the support they receive, the meaning they attach to their experiences, and their proposed ways of strengthening inclusive practices. The literature also shows that inclusive education challenges are at multiple levels. Some teachers may face challenges such as lack of training for special and inclusive education, lack of teaching materials, big class size, time limitation, variation of learners' needs, and lack of cooperation with parents and school staffs. These concerns are relevant to the present research as they give areas on which to explore how teachers experience and respond to the realities of inclusive classroom practice. The present study does not presume that teachers live these problems in the same ways and aims to gain some insight into the teachers' lived experiences, and the ways in which they make sense of these experiences.

Differentiated instruction, visual support, peer assisted learning, collaborative activities, flexible teaching and positive teacher attitudes have also been shown to be important in supporting learners with SEN in previous research. These findings are relevant to the current study as they give a basis for examining teacher's strategies that are used in classrooms. The study acknowledges that teachers are not passive transactors in the process of inclusive education, but active practitioners who continually adapt, develop and assess strategies according to what they have at their disposal, and what their learners need.

Literature also focuses on the need for professional development and collaboration. Ongoing opportunities for teacher knowledge and skills development are needed and collaboration with other colleagues, school leaders, parents and other stakeholders can provide further support to address complex learner needs. This is especially true in the context of the current study as participants' experiences could indicate what support is lacking and what could be improved in the collaboration between schools.

Based on the literature reviewed, context-specific studies are also needed. While inclusive education has been explored in other educational contexts, the experiences of teachers in the District of Barotac Nuevo in SY 2026-2027 may not be fully grasped from those experiences. Local school conditions, resources, teacher preparation, administrative practices, community involvement and learner characteristics may impact on the experiences and practice of inclusive education. The current research thus aims to gain a rich understanding of these experiences in the local context.

Moreover, the literature serves as the basis for the development of the practical output of the study that is KAPIT-BISIG. The intended functions of the framework reflect the recurring recommendations of the previous studies, namely capacity building, sharing resources, professional collaboration, stakeholder engagement and institutional support. But instead of taking these recommendations and then examining them in the context of the Philippines, the present study will value the experiences, challenges, responses and recommendations of the teacher-participants in determining the components of KAPIT-BISIG.

R. Relevance to the Current Study

The present study is relevant due to its incorporation of existing knowledge, local context, lived experiences of teachers and practical action. The study goes beyond challenges to

consider teachers' knowledge and responses to challenges and to draw on teachers' experiences to design a context-responsive support framework. The study seeks to create a mechanism through KAPIT-BISIG that will enhance teacher capability, foster collaborative efforts, facilitate exchange of inclusive practices and resources, and promote coordinated support for learners with SEN.

In conclusion, the current research helps to further evolve inclusive education by bridging gap between research evidence and classroom practice. It acknowledges that sustainable inclusion is not only dependent on skilled and motivated teachers, but on a supportive school system and on collaboration among all the stakeholders. In this sense, the study aims to produce significant academic results and relevant applications for enhancing the inclusive education practice in elementary schools.

3. Research Methodology

The research design, participants, setting, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods used in the study are presented. A qualitative approach was used to gain insights into the lived experiences of the regular elementary school teachers in the selected public schools of the District of Barotac Nuevo for SY 2026–2027. The researcher sought details of teachers' experiences and problems along with strategies adopted in implementing inclusive education of learners with special educational needs using semi-structured interviews.

A. Research Design and Rationale

The research design used in this study was qualitative with a phenomenological approach. This design was utilized to explore and understand the lived experiences of regular classroom teachers in implementing inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN) in Barotac Nuevo District, for SY 2026-2027. The qualitative method was suitable for this study as the aim was to capture teachers' experiences from their own worldview, as opposed to measuring variables and/or establishing statistical relationships between variables. It was an opportunity to explore how teachers' experiences in real inclusive classroom settings led them to make meanings, perceptions, challenges, responses and reflections.

The phenomenological design was chosen because the main concern of the study was that of the phenomenon of inclusive education with learners with SEN as lived by the regular classroom teacher. Phenomenology is an attempt to grasp the meaning of lived experiences of the phenomenon and how the meaning is interpreted by the individual. The method used in this study enabled the researcher to look at the problems teachers face and to investigate teachers' perceptions, interpretation and response to the problems in their daily classroom activities. It also offered an opportunity to gain insight into the impact of their experiences on their teaching practice, professional learning, attitudes, relationship with learners, and perceptions of support from schools, parents and other stakeholders.

The phenomenological approach was pertinent due to the fact that inclusive education is a complex and contextually dependent practice. While teachers may face similar challenges, the experience of and response to those challenges may differ, depending on the teacher's professional preparation, classroom context, resources, relations with learners/colleagues, and institutional supports. This focus on the participants' experiences, and the use of participants' own words, enabled the study to provide a deep and situated understanding of inclusive education that may not be fully captured by quantitative measurements alone.

In-depth interviews were conducted to capture participants' experiences in detail. The interview process allowed teachers to share their experiences with learners with SEN, the challenges they faced, the strategies they adopted to meet the various needs, the supports they received, and suggestions they had for improving inclusive education. The six phases of reflexive thematic analysis, outlined by Braun and Clarke (2020), were followed to analyse the collected narratives, identify patterns of meaning and recurring themes throughout the responses to the interview questions, and to maintain the depth and context of each individual analysis.

The research design also was done in relation with the practical purpose of the study. The results were designed to both help create a better understanding of the lived experiences of teachers as well as to pinpoint areas where teachers need more training, resources, collaboration, and institutional supports. Based on these findings, a school-based collaborative support framework – KAPIT-BISIG – was proposed. The framework is designed to capture teachers' voiced needs and experiences and to provide a pathway to capacity building, sharing inclusive practices and resources, collaborative problem solving, stakeholder engagement and continuous improvement.

The phenomenological approach was therefore deemed suitable as it allowed the study to take into account the depth, meaning and contextual nature of the teachers' experiences as well as to establish a grounded basis for tackling the problems identified. The study aimed to address the disconnect between theoretical knowledge of teachers' lived experiences and to enhance the realities of inclusive education for learners with SEN in elementary schools.

B. Research Locale and Context

The study was implemented in selected public elementary schools in District of Barotac Nuevo, Division of Iloilo, Philippines for School Year 2026-2027. Barotac Nuevo is a municipality in the Province of Iloilo, having both urban and rural communities with public elementary schools that serve children with diverse learning, development, behavioral, social and academic needs. The district affords adequate context for understanding inclusive education as regular classroom teachers are expected to be able to cater for learner diversity and offer equal opportunities in mainstream classrooms.

The research locale was chosen because the regular classroom teacher's reality of inclusive education is found in the context of the public elementary school. Teachers are likely to be asked to cater for variations in the ability, learning style, behavior, communication and educational needs of the students

with the conditions available in the classroom and the resources available in the school. It is important to understand these circumstances as a context for teachers' interpretations of inclusion, their reactions to challenges, the adaptations of their teaching practice, and how they seek support to meet the needs of learners with special education needs (SEN).

The Philippine basic education system is also in the spirit of inclusive and equitable education, which also influences the context of the study. In the school environment, inclusive education requires the participation of classroom teachers as well as school leaders, parents, students and other actors. Professional development, instructional materials, administrative support, parent involvement, and opportunities for collaboration can impact teacher effectiveness in implementing inclusive practices. This means that it is important to study teachers' experiences in their real school context as this offers a more meaningful picture of the factors that enable or make inclusive education difficult.

Regular classroom teachers with experience of teaching or supporting learners with SEN have been targeted for the study. These teachers were deemed suitable in that they are the ones who are on the front line and face the daily challenges of inclusion in mainstream classrooms. Their experiences can be very informative in order to understand the difficulties they are facing, their strategies, support they are getting and their perceptions of what needs to be done to enhance inclusive education.

The local context is especially relevant as inclusive education is shaped by the specific needs and assets of each school community. The results of the studies that have been performed in other geographical or institutional contexts may not fully correspond to the situation of teachers in Barotac Nuevo. The study looked at the phenomenon within the district to create context-specific knowledge that can be used in professional development, school based supports, resource allocation, collaboration and other ways to bolster inclusive practices.

Moreover, the research locale was found to be appropriate for developing KAPIT-BISIG, a framework of collaborative support in school which was proposed based on the findings of the study. The framework should be in response to what the teachers in the local context actually need and have experienced, instead of using only the results from previous research done in a more general manner. It can be used as a template to build teacher capacity, share inclusive strategies and resources, solve problems together and coordinate support among teachers, school leaders, parents and others.

In general, the Barotac Nuevo District served as a relevant and meaningful context to understand the experiences of teachers' lives in the implementation of inclusive education. The study's location enabled the researcher to gain insight into the concept of inclusion from the practitioners' point of view who directly work with learners with SEN and to build on their experiences to propose a context relevant support framework. This local approach is intended to help improve inclusive education practices in the Philippines' public elementary schools as a process of continuous improvement.

C. Selection of Participants / Co-participants

Teachers directly implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN) in the selected elementary schools in Barotac Nuevo, Iloilo were the target participants of this study. Specifically the study targeted regular classroom teachers who had learners with SEN in a mainstream classroom setting. In the district of Barotac Nuevo, there are 15 learners with SEN who are formally placed in regular classrooms in various elementary schools for SY 2026-2027 as a result of the inclusive education policy of the Department of Education.

The participants were selected based on the following criteria with the aim of making the study relevant:

1. The teacher has to be currently handling at least one learner with SEN in a mainstream classroom;
2. the teacher must have at least one year of teaching experience in the public elementary school system; and
3. the teacher agrees to be interviewed and share his/her experiences in depth.

Based on these criteria, the researcher chose eight respondents of Regular Classroom Teachers by using Purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique is suitable for phenomenological studies as participants will be able to describe the phenomenon being studied in rich and meaningful ways. The chosen teachers gave a detailed description of their practice, problems and experiences with learners with SEN. They played a key role in the study by providing insights into how inclusive education is enacted, negotiated, and sustained in everyday classroom practice.

D. Data Generation Methods

This study used qualitative data generation methods that are appropriate to capture lived experience, perceptions, and reflective insights from teachers in relation to the experience of inclusion of learners with special educational needs (SEN). The main data gathering tool used was semi-structured interview with regular classroom teachers who were currently working with the learners with SEN in selected elementary schools in the District of Barotac Nuevo.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants. Teachers with hands-on and ongoing experience in supporting learners with SEN in inclusive classroom settings were targeted in this sampling technique. This worked to ensure that the data collected were rich, relevant and closely related to the phenomenon studied. The participants were invited to express their experiences, difficulties, strategies and ideas on their contribution in the promotion of social inclusion of learners with diverse needs.

The interviews were conducted according to an Interview Guide that was developed by the researcher and approved by a panel of experts in qualitative research. The guide included content on areas of importance including instructional adaptations, peer interaction, classroom management, collaboration with parents and specialists, and teacher perspectives about inclusive practice. To encourage participants to speak freely, and reflect deeply, on their experiences and

allow new insights to emerge beyond the prepared questions, open-ended questions were used.

The interviews were face-to-face and were held in the school premises, with a duration of 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the time of the participants and their preference. All the interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interviewees to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data.

Data collection was carried out until data saturation was achieved. The eighth interview was the point at which saturation was reached and no new themes or significant insights were identified and the answers started to follow a similar pattern between participants. This meant that the data obtained were adequate in describing and understanding the phenomenon studied.

Prior to the conduct of the study, formal permission was requested from the District Supervisor of Barotac Nuevo and the respective school heads for the proper and ethical conduct of the study. An informed consent form was provided to each participant, which described the purpose of the study, the procedures, the potential benefits, and explained that participation was voluntary. Participants were also told that they could leave the study at any time without facing any consequences and their identity and answers would not be revealed.

Aside from the interviews, the researcher also kept field notes and a reflective journal to record contextual observations, nonverbal cues, and personal insights during and after each interview. These assisted in the elaboration of the data collected in order to contain the views of the participants' tone and emotion as well as other situational factors that might have influenced their views.

All the data collected was kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. Interviews, field notes, and reflective notes resulted in a richer and more credible description of teachers' experiences regarding inclusive education. The study aimed to highlight the voices of classroom teachers in order to capture both practical and emotional experiences of inclusion and to offer insights that can contribute to enhancing policy, professional development, and inclusive practices in Barotac Nuevo district.

E. Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity

The researcher was the main instrument in data collection, interpretation and analysis in this qualitative phenomenological study. The researcher identified and recruited qualified participants, built rapport, carried out in-depth interviews, recorded the participant narration, analyzed the data, and interpreted the themes. As a qualitative study that requires direct communication between the researcher and participants, the researcher was aware of the possibility that personal experiences, professional knowledge, beliefs and expectations may impact the research process.

The researcher is a teacher with direct experience in the Philippine elementary school who is familiar with the realities concerning teaching diverse learners. This professional experience was beneficial for gaining a sense of the context in which participants' accounts were given and for facilitating meaningful communication in the interview process. However, such familiarity could also create the possibility of preconceived assumptions about inclusive education, teachers' challenges, or the strategies they commonly use. Therefore, the researcher consciously practiced reflexivity throughout the research process.

Reflexivity involved the continuous examination of the researcher's own assumptions, perspectives, experiences, and potential biases and how these might influence interactions with participants and interpretation of the data. Before and during data collection, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to record personal observations, expectations, reactions, methodological decisions, and reflections following interviews. This process helped the researcher distinguish participants' actual accounts from personal interpretations and encouraged openness to perspectives that differed from the researcher's expectations.

During the interviews, the researcher adopted a nonjudgmental and participant-centered stance. Open-ended questions and follow-up prompts were used to encourage participants to describe their experiences in their own words. The researcher avoided leading questions and refrained from expressing agreement, disagreement, or personal opinions about participants' responses. Participants were allowed time and opportunity to clarify, elaborate on and/or correct their statements. In this way, it was possible to ensure that the data were a reflection of the participants' experiences and not the researchers' assumptions.

Reflexivity was also observed by the researcher when analyzing the data. The participants' narratives were analyzed in a careful and repeated manner and emerging codes and themes were linked back to the data. The researcher was sensitive to statements that challenged initial expectations and refrained from imposing pre-designed categories on the participants' accounts. A systematic process of reflexive thematic analysis was used following the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2020) while also acknowledging that interpretation is an active and reflective process.

The researcher ensured that the findings were credible and trustworthy by keeping an audit trail of key methodological decisions, interview procedures, coding process, development of themes, and revisions. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants were ensured during the research process. Transcripts and reporting were de-identified and/or appropriately coded. The participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

The researcher also noted that power dynamics may have also had an impact on the findings, as the participants were also education professionals. To this end, an atmosphere of respect and safety was created for the interviews, so that positive and difficult experiences could be shared freely without fear of being judged by the interviewer or facing negative outcomes. Participation experiences and perspectives were valued and the researcher made emphasis that there were no right or wrong answers.

By employing these reflexive practices, the researcher recognized that the intention of the phenomenological

qualitative research is not to completely divorce oneself from one's perspectives. Instead, the aim was to be transparent, critically self-aware and to be mindful of the influence of the researcher's positionality on the research process. The researcher aimed to maintain the voice of the participants and to generate a faithful interpretation, by engaging in an ongoing reflexivity process.

In the end the researcher was not just a data collector. The researcher acted as a listener, interpreter and facilitator of participants' narratives while being methodologically rigorous and ethically responsible. The insights derived from these lived experiences served as the basis for the proposed KAPIT-BISIG framework where component parts and functions were grounded on the actual needs, challenges, and recommendations of teachers who were studied.

F. Ethical Considerations

The study will follow the applicable ethical standards, institutional research policies and laws in the Philippines, in particular the principles of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Protection of the privacy, confidentiality, dignity and professional welfare of the participants will be taken into particular consideration, as this is a study about the lived experience, challenges, practice and perceptions of the regular classroom teacher when working with learners with special education needs (SEN) in the context of inclusive education.

Each participant will receive an informed consent form prior to the start of the study that will provide a clear description of the purpose and nature of the study, research procedures, and the amount of time required for participation, the voluntary nature of participation, potential risks and benefits, method for maintaining confidentiality, and the participant's right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or negative consequences. Participants will be allowed ample time to raise questions and address concerns prior to consent.

Participation will be strictly voluntary. No participant will be pressured, coerced or unduly influenced into participation. The researcher will adopt necessary precautions to prevent participants from feeling compelled to participate due to relationship with school administrators, colleagues and the researcher, since it is a professional context for the study. It will also be explained that the decision to participate or not is in no way related to employment, professional evaluation or relationship with the school or school district.

Participants will be known by pseudonyms or codes to maintain privacy and confidentiality. Transcripts, analysis and research reports will exclude identifying information concerning participants, schools, colleagues, administrators, learners or any other individuals identified. For participants will be discussing personal experiences around sensitive issues such as classroom problems, institutional supports, or school practices, the researcher will take special care to ensure that statements may not be reasonably connected to individual participants or specific schools. Quotes from participants in the final report will be anonymized using participant codes and selected and contextualized in ways that do not identify particular participants.

The study will adhere to the proper data privacy and protection requirements. Interview recordings, transcriptions, field notes, consent forms and other research materials will be securely stored and used by the researcher and others for research purposes only as needed. Electronic files will be safeguarded using appropriate password or access controls, and physical documents will be stored in a secure area. Research data will be collected and used only for the purposes described in the informed consent and will be retained and disposed of in accordance with institutional requirements and applicable data-protection regulations.

The researcher will also take measures to minimize potential risks associated with participation. Although the study is not expected to involve significant physical risk, participants may experience discomfort when discussing challenging professional experiences. Participants will therefore be informed that they may pause the interview, decline to answer a question, or withdraw from the study without consequence. The researcher will maintain a respectful, nonjudgmental, and supportive environment throughout the interview process.

Particular care will be taken in protecting information concerning learners with SEN. Participants will not be required to disclose the names or other personally identifiable information of learners. When examples involving learners are necessary to explain participants' experiences, identifying details will be excluded or modified to protect the learners' privacy. The study will be based on teachers' professional experiences and not to gather unnecessary personal information of learners.

The study will be subjected to the necessary ethical review and institutional approval of the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA (UPHSD) before the data collection will be done. The researcher will also adhere to applicable principles and requirements of the Philippine Health

Research Ethics Board (PHREB) if applicable including informed consent, respect for persons, privacy and confidentiality, risk minimization, equitable participation, and responsible research data management. Appropriate permission will also be obtained from the relevant education authorities and school officials prior to recruiting participants and conducting interviews.

Researcher will maintain the highest standards of research integrity in conducting the research. Responses given by participants will be recorded veridically and not fabricated, falsified, selectively manipulated or intentionally misrepresented. As the study has a phenomenological design and uses reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher will demonstrate reflexivity in the process of analyzing personal assumptions and possible biases that may affect the process of collecting, interpreting and reporting on the lived experiences of the participants.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools will be transparently disclosed in accordance with institutional research policies. When allowed, AI can be used for certain tasks like language enhancement, organization, formatting, or

supporting administrative research. The researcher, however, will be responsible for the accuracy, interpretation, analysis, methodological decisions and originality of the study. The use of AI tools will not be used to replace the researcher's interpretation of participants' lived experience. Confidential, personally identifiable and sensitive participant information, interview recordings, transcripts, and research data will not be posted on public or generative-AI sites.

The overall study will respect the following ethical principles: respect for persons, voluntary participation, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, privacy, confidentiality, data protection and research integrity. These safeguards will be in place to make sure that participants are treated with dignity and that their lived experiences are represented responsibly. The ethical principles of the study will also be used in the development of KAPIT-BISIG so that the proposed framework will be based on their experiences and needs in protecting their rights and confidentiality.

G. Data Transcription and Management

The data obtained from the in-depth interview will be collected systematically and make sure that the data is accurate, confidential, secure and integrity in the research process. Interviews will be audio recorded (with participants informed consent) to provide for accurate transcription of their responses to the questions and to capture their responses as fully as possible. Prior to each interview, remind participants of the purpose of the recording and their options to opt out of having their interview recorded and/or to opt out of the study per the informed consent.

After every interview the researcher will transcribe the recorded interviews verbatim and include any meaningful expressions, repetitions, and pauses that could be helpful in understanding the participants' experience. If applicable, relevant nonverbal expressions and/or observations of context will also be recorded on the research notes. Transcriptions will be done and checked for accuracy and completeness with the original sound recordings. The researcher will make any necessary corrections before coding and thematic analysis of the transcripts.

Each participant will receive his or her own participant code or pseudonym to protect his/her identity, while maintaining a code or pseudonym for each individual. During the transcription process, real names, school names, names of colleagues, administrators, learners and other identifying information used in the interviews will be removed, generalized, and/or coded appropriately. If required, a separate record which identifies each participant to each code will be securely maintained and will not be included with the working dataset used for analysis.

The researcher will arrange the transcripts and research materials in an orderly manner. Interview transcripts, field notes, coding records, reflexive journal entries and other relevant documents will be kept in password protected digital files and/or secure physical files. The research data will be restricted to the researcher and authorized research personnel (if applicable). Data will not be shared with unauthorized access to the research material.

The data will be transcribed and used as the main text data source for Braun and Clarke (2020) six phase reflexive thematic analysis. The researcher will repeat the reading of the transcripts, initial coding, development of potential themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and the final report. The researcher will keep a track of the coding decisions, theme development and analytical reflections, in order to ensure transparency and an appropriate audit trail.

The researcher will compare written transcripts with the original recordings as well as re-visit the data many times as part of the analysis to further credibility and accuracy of the transcripts. Participants may be contacted to clarify the meaning of their statements when necessary, and when ethically appropriate. But, with the reflexive nature of the analytical approach chosen by the researcher, participants will not be asked to endorse or change the researcher's thematic interpretations.

The researcher will make sure participant information shared in confidence is not posted on publicly available platforms or sent to external generative-AI systems for transcription, analysis, or interpretation. If any electronic or technological means is employed in the transcription and/or organization of the data, its use will align with institutional research policies and data-protection needs. Transcriptions and interpretations will remain the responsibility of the researcher.

All research data shall be kept for as long as necessary by the University of Perpetual Help System DALTA of relevant research policies and data-protection requirements. Electronic records will be securely destroyed and physical records will be shredded at the end of the retention period. Copies of materials which contain personally identifiable information will be similarly disposed of securely.

These procedures will guarantee that the voices of the participants will be accurately represented, while at the same time maintaining confidentiality, privacy and data security. Data gathered through the interviews will be organized systematically to serve as a sound basis in understanding the teachers' lived experiences and for the development of KAPIT-BISIG, a collaborative support framework that will be developed with the findings of the study to be implemented in the school.

H. Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected from in-depth interviews were analyzed by using Braun and Clarke's (2020) 6-step reflexive thematic analysis. This method was chosen because it offers a flexible and systematic way of identifying, analyzing and interpreting patterns of meaning in qualitative data and acknowledges the active and reflexive part of the researcher within the process of analysis. The emphasis of analysis was to make sense of the lived experiences of the regular classroom teachers in the implementation of inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN).

The analysis was done in the following six phases:

1) Phase 1: Getting to know the Data

The recording of interviews was transcribed first and the transcripts were read many times to get a thorough knowledge of the participants' stories. At this stage the researcher observed that the teachers' experience, problems, solutions, needs and suggestions appeared and recurred and that there were potential patterns. The researcher also scanned the reflexive journal to look for personal assumptions and reflections which might bias the interpretation of the data.

2) Phase 2 - Creating the initial codes

The researcher thoroughly analyzed the transcripts and coded meaningful segments systematically according to the research questions. Codes captured the participants' significant ideas, experiences, perceptions, actions, challenges and responses. Coding was data driven and concepts emerged from the participants' narratives rather than being predetermined. Comparisons of similar statements among the participants were made, without losing the context and meaning of individual statements.

3) Phase 3: Generating initial themes

The first codes were analyzed for relationships, similarities, differences and patterns of meaning. The codes were clustered together and created into potential themes. The researcher was interested in the contribution of an individual code to a more overarching understanding of teachers' lived experience of implementing inclusive education. At this stage, themes were identified in relation to the research questions and at the same time, remained connected with the participants' accounts.

4) Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

The researcher checked through the possible themes in two phases. Firstly, the coded extracts under each theme were analyzed to see if they created a coherent pattern. Secondly, the themes were reviewed with the data set as a whole to assess if the themes were appropriate to the participants' stories and if they were related to the research objectives. Themes that were overlapping were either revised or merged together, the themes that did not have enough supporting data were divided and the themes that were not meaningful enough or did not capture the meaning of the participants' accounts were discarded as needed.

5) Phase 5 - Defining and Naming Themes

Following the review and refinement of the themes, the researcher traced the scope, focus and meaning of each theme in detail. Definitions were established to explain what each theme meant, and how it helped to understand the phenomenon being studied. Themes were labelled in a concise and meaningful way that reflected the participants experience, whilst also conveying a central concept of the theme.

6) Phase 6: Preparing the Report

The final step was to group the themes together in a logical sequence to answer the research questions and achieve the research goals. The interpretation of each theme was illustrated and supported by selected participant quotations while maintaining the anonymity of the participants by using participant codes or pseudonyms. The researcher related the results with related literature and theories as well as anchored the interpretations in the participants' accounts.

Throughout the analytical process, reflexivity was maintained. The researcher was aware that qualitative analysis is an interpretation and that one's personal experiences, professional knowledge and assumptions might affect the analysis. Reflexive journal, coding records and analytic notes were kept to record key analytical decisions and reflections, while also keeping to an audit trail. The researcher was also willing to accept results that were different from the expected results.

The final themes were broken down and common challenges, strategies, support and recommendations were identified from the teachers' lived experiences. The findings was used as the empirical basis in the development of KAPIT-BISIG as a proposed school-based collaborative support framework. The framework was developed to directly address the needs identified by participants across the following key domains: Teacher capacity building; Sharing of inclusive practices and resources; Collaborative problem-solving; Stakeholder engagement; Continuous improvement.

Therefore, the data analysis was carried out from the participants' narratives → initial codes → patterns of meaning → refined themes → interpretation of the lived experiences, to the development of KAPIT-BISIG. This process helped to ensure that the proposed practical output was based on the real experiences and expressed needs of teachers and not just on the researcher's assumption or what had been written.

I. Trustworthiness and Rigor

Credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability will be used to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study.

The credibility of the findings will be developed by conducting in-depth interviews, asking the right questions, scrutinizing the transcripts and comparing the themes that have emerged with the voices of the participants. If necessary, member checking can be done to clarify the accuracy of the interpreted responses.

It will be dependable through the systematic documentation of the research procedures, transcription, coding, theme development, and analytical decisions. An audit trail will be kept in the study.

Researcher reflexivity will be used to support confirmability. The researcher will keep reflexive notes and reflect on personal assumptions in order to ensure that interpretations will be based on the participants' accounts and not the researcher's personal beliefs.

Support for transferability will be made available through the provision of clear description of the research context, participants and teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education in selected public elementary schools in Barotac Nuevo District, Division of Iloilo in SY 2026-2027.

These will increase the credibility and rigor of the findings and build the proposed KAPIT-BISIG school based collaborative support framework on the experiences, challenges and support needs expressed by participants.

4. Presentation and Analysis of Data

This section provides and examines the findings that were collected from the in-depth interviews with regular classroom

teachers about their experiences in the implementation of inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN). The results have been structured based on the research questions and presented using themes and subthemes based on the participants' stories.

Braun and Clarke's (2020) approach to reflexive thematic analysis was used in the data analysis which included familiarizing with the interview data, generating initial codes, developing and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and interpreting the findings. To maintain confidentiality, selected participant quotations are used to substantiate the identified themes.

The analysis is centered on the teachers' experiences, problems, strategies, professional and personal development and perceived need for support for inclusive education. The results give a better insight of the realities of teachers and will be used as a basis in the creation of the proposed KAPIT-BISIG school based collaborative support framework.

A. Overview of Participants and Context

The respondents of the study were regular classroom teachers in selected public elementary schools in Barotac Nuevo District, Division of Iloilo in School Year 2026-2027. They were chosen because they have first-hand experience of working with learners with special education needs (SEN) in an inclusive classroom.

The participants shared their experiences and challenges, strategies, and support needed to implement inclusive education. These stories gave them an abundance of data concerning the experiences of working with diverse learners, the modification of instruction, the involvement of other people, and the other constraints of limited resources and supports. The context of the study depicts the real school and classroom situation of inclusive education, which serves as a foundation in comprehending the teachers' experience and the proposed KAPIT-BISIG school-based collaborative support framework.

B. Emergent Themes/Categories

The analysis of participants' narratives resulted in seven main themes depicting the recurring patterns found in their stories of inclusive education of learners with special education needs (SEN). Systematic coding, grouping similar responses and looking for patterns across the interview data were used to develop themes. Each theme covers a specific dimension of the participants' experiences: how they were prepared; their knowledge of inclusion; their ways of teaching; their relationships with students in the classroom; their problems; their personal experiences and professional experiences; and their perceived supports.

1) Theme 1: Limited Professional Training and Support

Limited Professional Training and Support" refers to how participants reported being inadequately prepared and/or lacking in assistance to address learners with SEN. Participants often reported low levels of formal training or specific professional development on inclusive education. Some of the participants mentioned that their knowledge was acquired through personal experiences, practice in class, self-learning, and some training time to time. The participants also reported situations where they had the need of more support and guidance in helping meet the diverse needs of learners.

The accounts also contained details on the availability of instructional materials, technical assistance and support from school personnel. The participants reported situations where they had to deal with classroom needs despite the lack of specialized resources or support. All these responses were clustered under this theme, due to the fact that these responses consistently referred to the preparation, training opportunities and access of teachers to professional support.

2) Theme 2: Positive Understanding of Inclusion

The second theme is Positive Understanding of Inclusion, which is the result of the description by the participants of how they perceived inclusive education and their experiences of working with learners with different needs. Participants overall agreed that learners with SEN should be accepted and inclusion is about learners having opportunities to be in the classroom with other learners.

They described treating students fairly, acknowledging differences between them, opportunities for participation and an accepting classroom environment. Participants also relayed the ways they strive to understand the needs of the learners as well as to offer support where needed. These responses demonstrated a consistent theme of positive attitudes to the having and inclusion of the learner with SEN in the regular classroom.

3) Theme 3: Adaptive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners

The third theme, Adaptive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners, encapsulates what participants reported as their teaching practices in relation to difference in learners' abilities/needs. The participants indicated that they make adaptations with activities, instructions, learning materials, and the tasks of the classroom to make the lessons more accessible for the learners.

The participants mentioned the use of differentiated activities, visual materials, simplified instructions, repetition, individualized assistance, group activities, and peer support. Others mentioned making changes to pacing of lessons and giving more instructions to students who needed more support. These accounts demonstrate the different classroom practices participants used when teaching learners with varying levels of ability and learning needs.

4) Theme 4: Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships

The fourth theme, Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships, looks at what participants said about their interactions with learners and how these interactions had positive relationships. Participants shared activities and classroom strategies to help learners with SEN join in with their peers and to be involved in cooperative learning.

The participants explained that it was important to encourage the learners to work together, help each other, take part in group activities and respecting individual differences. Opportunities for peer assistance and involvement of learners with SEN in

classroom activities and social events were also mentioned in some accounts. All the responses referred to teachers making an effort to provide opportunities for learners to interact and participate.

5) Theme 5: Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion

The fifth theme, Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion, is the challenges that the participants encountered in implementing inclusive education. Issues mentioned were having to deal with many pupils in a class, variations in pupils' ability and needs, lack of time, lack of resources, and/or the need to deal with a number of learners at the same time.

Some also reported problems associated with the availability of adequate support from parents, school staff or other people involved in the education of the learners. The participants reported situations where they had to put in extra effort and time to meet the needs of learners with SEN, and the needs of the whole class. This was a pattern that was repeated in these accounts when it came to the practical issues encountered in an inclusive classroom.

6) Theme 6: Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion

The sixth theme, Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion, described changes and experiences that participants attributed to working with learners with SEN that developed their patience, understanding, flexibility, confidence and ability to respond to differing learner needs.

The participants also reported that they acquired knowledge and skills in real classrooms. Some said that working with diverse learners helped them to try different strategies and be more sensitive towards individual differences. They shared their experiences as well as their own professional learning as a result of being involved in inclusive practices.

7) Theme 7: Strengthening Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion

The seventh theme, Strengthening Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion, represents the description of the supports that the participants received, and what they felt they needed to support the implementation of inclusive education. People talked about the need for administrative support, working together with other professionals, training, suitable teaching materials, parental involvement and engagement of the community.

The participants reported instances where working with colleagues, school staff, parents and other stakeholders facilitated their response to learners' needs. Meanwhile, they also identified areas of areas for further assistance, resources, training and cooperation. These stories were a regular trend of the importance of support from other people and groups inside and outside of the classroom.

C. Thematic Narratives with Verbatim Quotes

The detailed narratives of the seven themes that emerged from the interview accounts of the participants are presented here. For every theme, verbatim quotations from the eight participants are provided, thus allowing a demonstration of the findings' grounding in the data. The conversation centers on the commonalities that arose in the participants' accounts of their practice, their experience of inclusive education and the challenges and support they sought to implement inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN).

1) Theme 1: Limited Professional Training and Support

Limited Professional Training and Support was the first theme that came out from the participants who repeatedly mentioned having little or no formal training in inclusive education or special education. 100% of all participants said they had no formal training specifically for dealing with learners with SEN. Their responses also indicated low levels of access to specific guidance, professional support and resources.

Participant 1 stated:

"I haven't received any formal training in inclusive education or special education."

Similarly, Participant 3 shared:

"I am teaching Kindergarten with 11 years of teaching already and I had no training in handling children with special education needs."

Participant 6 also described the experience of handling a learner with SEN for the first time without formal preparation:

"It is my first time to handle a learner with special education needs yet I have no training about it."

Participant 8 likewise reported:

"To date, I have not had the opportunity to participate in any training programs or professional development workshops that specifically focus on inclusive education or special education strategies and methodologies."

The participants also described the support they received from school personnel and SPED teachers. Participant 1 explained:

"I feel that the support I get in managing inclusion is sometimes not enough. My co-teachers and school heads try to help, but I still need more guidance from SPED teachers."

Participant 2 similarly stated:

"Based on my experiences, we have no adequate support while managing inclusive education. The Sped teachers just visit occasionally and ask about the status of my learner."

Participant 8 described a similar experience:

"Honestly, I've felt like I'm on my own in managing inclusive learning. The school head and SPED teacher just assign me students with special needs without giving me any guidance or training on how to support them."

These accounts consistently described limited formal preparation and varying levels of professional support. Participants repeatedly mentioned the need for training, seminars, workshops, guidance from SPED teachers, and access to appropriate resources.

2) Theme 2: Positive Understanding of Inclusion

The second theme, Positive Understanding of Inclusion, reflects the participants' descriptions of inclusive education as providing equal opportunities, acceptance, respect, participation, and belonging for learners with and without SEN. Participants consistently described inclusion as allowing learners with different abilities to learn together in the same classroom.

Participant 1 described inclusive education as:

"For me, inclusive education means embracing every learner inside classroom, no matter who they are. It's about making sure that each child feels they belong, that they are seen, heard, and valued."

Participant 2 expressed a similar understanding:

"For me, inclusive education is having equal access to quality education regardless of the students' abilities, backgrounds or characteristics."

Participant 3 stated:

"Inclusive education means providing equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds or needs."

Participant 7 also emphasized equal opportunity and respect:

"For me, inclusive education is about giving equal opportunities in teaching all children. It is also about respecting and understanding learners with special education needs and not discrimination them regardless of their situation."

Participants also described the value they placed on including learners with SEN in regular classes. Participant 5 stated:

"I believe that every child has the right to be educated regardless of their abilities and be given appropriate support and opportunities."

Participant 6 explained:

"Including Leaners with SEN in a regular class can make them feel that they are part of a community and in that way, they could appreciate that they live a normal life."

Participant 8 similarly shared:

"I believe that including Special Education Needs students in regular classes is beneficial for everyone involved. It promotes diversity, understanding, and acceptance among students."

Across the participants' accounts, inclusion was repeatedly described in terms of equality, acceptance, respect, participation, belonging, and opportunities for learners with different abilities.

3) Theme 3: Adaptive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners

The third theme, Adaptive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners, emerged from participants' descriptions of modifying their teaching approaches according to the abilities, needs, and interests of their learners. Participants reported using differentiated instruction, visual aids, simplified instructions, additional time, hands-on activities, peer tutoring, group work, and other classroom adjustments.

Participant 1 stated:

"I use differentiated instruction and include hands-on activities that learners with SEN can easily follow."

The same participant also described the use of visual aids:

"For me, visual aids are effective for enhancing and supporting these learners, particularly when paired with hands-on activities."

Participant 3 described several adjustments in instruction:

"*My strategies to better accommodate learners with SEN are using differentiated instructions, use of simplified and clear instructions, and I also provide additional time and support to the learner with SEN."*

Participant 4 similarly explained:

"I adjust the content of my lessons, the process of teaching and learning environment to match the individual need and interest of my learner with SEN."

Participants also described the use of group activities and peer support. Participant 2 stated:

"One approach that worked well in helping my SEN learner is 'peer grouping'."

Participant 5 described modifying activities and assessment:

"I modify my teaching strategies through differentiated activities. Since my SEN learner can't go along with regular pupils, I provided her with alternative assessment based on her capacity and I also give her extra time to complete her task."

Participant 6 reported:

"I assessed the ability of my learner with SEN so I would know what strategy I could use that will be helpful to my learner. I applied differentiated instructions such as giving various activities during our seatwork so I could give extra time for his needs."

Participant 8 described strategies specifically used with a deaf learner:

"I'd use visual aids and sign language to support deaf learners and provide written instructions to ensure clear communication. I'd also differentiate my teaching strategies to meet individual needs, incorporating adaptive materials and technology."

The participants' accounts also included structured routines, positive reinforcement, physical activities, direct instruction, peer tutoring, and hands-on learning. These responses showed that participants used different instructional approaches and classroom adjustments according to the specific needs of their learners.

4) Theme 4: Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships

The fourth theme, Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships, reflects participants' descriptions of encouraging learners with SEN to interact, participate, cooperate, and develop relationships with their classmates. Participants frequently mentioned group activities, peer grouping, buddy systems, cooperative learning, and classroom reminders about respect and acceptance.

Participant 1 described the use of group work:

"One activity that worked well is group work, where learners with SEN are grouped with classmates who can guide and share ideas with them."

The participant also recalled an experience where classmates helped a learner with SEN:

"One time, an SEN learner was included in a group activity where his classmates kindly helped him finish the task. They showed patience and teamwork, which made him feel part of the group."

Participant 2 described peer grouping as a way of supporting social interaction:

"I selected a group of pupils to help my learner with SEN to work on some activities and I told them to play and chat with her so that she can socialize and feel that she is supported."

Participant 3 described pairing learners:

"One of the approaches that worked well in helping SEN students is by pairing regular student with SEN student to work together during activities."

Participant 4 explained:

"I usually organize cooperative learning activities in my class where pupils work together and ensuring each one has a valuable role."

Participant 7 also described the gradual development of peer acceptance:

"At first, my normal learners had a hard time working with her, but through my guidance and, later on, my normal learners realized that it's okay working with learner with SEN."

Participant 8 provided an example involving a deaf learner:

"We did a group storytelling activity where students worked together to create and tell a story. The deaf student used sign language, and the regular students learned some signs to join in."

Participants also described situations where learners with SEN initially had limited interaction with classmates. Participant 3 stated:

"My learner with SEN had less interaction with his classmates at first but eventually he learned to participate in our classroom activities and discussions."

Similarly, Participant 8 reported:

"Initially, my deaf learner was reserved and hesitant to engage with their peers, but after several sessions, they started to open up, interact, and enjoy activities together."

The accounts consistently described teachers' efforts to provide opportunities for interaction, cooperation, peer assistance, and participation in classroom activities.

5) Theme 5: Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion

The fifth theme, Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion, represents the difficulties participants described in managing inclusive classrooms. The challenges included classroom distractions, large class sizes, behavioral concerns, differences in learner abilities, limited time, insufficient resources, lack of training, and difficulties in providing individual attention.

Participant 1 described classroom distractions:

"The common challenges I face in implementing inclusive education include managing distractions in the classroom."

The participant further explained:

"It can be challenging to keep everyone focused while still providing support and understanding to the SEN learner."

Participant 5 described the difficulty of balancing the needs of the learner with SEN and the rest of the class:

"Handling students with SEN is somewhat very challenging for me because of the behavior that differs from the other students. They need attention from time to time and it's hard to do it with my regular students who also need my attention."

The same participant identified several challenges:

"Some of the challenges are the lack of training for teachers in handling the learners with special education needs, the large class size and inadequate resources for the teachers to be used in classes."

Participant 3 identified lack of training as a major difficulty:

"The most common challenge for me is the lack of training and knowledge in teaching or handling learners with SEN."

Participant 8 described the challenge of ensuring participation for all learners:

"I face challenges like making sure all students can participate and understand each other and finding ways to help students with different needs learn together."

Participants also shared specific classroom situations. Participant 7 recalled an experience involving a learner with autism:

"I had a learner with autism. One time, the moment she's inside my classroom, she immediately took off all her clothes. The she roamed around the classroom and took her classmates' stuff and threw it away while singing and laughing."

Participant 5 also described difficulties involving peer interactions:

"Most of the time, my learner is prone to bullying, teasing and causes distractions in the whole class and sometimes lead to behavioral issues."

The participants' narratives therefore included challenges related to teacher preparation, classroom management, learner behavior, peer interaction, class size, resources, time, and meeting diverse needs simultaneously.

6) Theme 6: Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion

The sixth theme, Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion, emerged from participants' descriptions of the changes and learning they experienced while teaching learners with SEN. Participants frequently mentioned developing patience, understanding, flexibility, creativity, adaptability, and new teaching strategies.

Participant 1 stated:

"Teaching students with SEN has made me more patient and understanding, especially when they need extra time or support."

The participant further shared:

"It taught me the value of patience, compassion, and creativity in teaching."

Participant 2 described changes in teaching practice:

"Teaching in inclusive education gave me a new experience in the teaching learning process wherein it improved my ability to teach using new strategies for the children to learn effectively."

Participant 3 shared:

"For me, teaching learners with SEN is a big challenge. I learned to understand them and loved them despite the difficulties I face in handling them."

Participant 4 described developing classroom management and personal qualities:

"I've developed effective behavior management to create a positive and supportive classroom management. Also, I've developed a deeper understanding and accept every day the challenges faced by my student with SEN, patience and flexibility is my most priority."

Participant 7 also described increased patience and adaptability:

"Teaching a learner with SEN deeply impacted my role as a

teacher. I never expected to become much more patient and adaptable in my teaching methods and learn to be more appreciative in my student's learning."

Participant 8 described the development of flexibility and creativity:

"Teaching students with special education needs has really opened my eyes to the importance of flexibility and creativity in the classroom. It's pushed me to think outside the box and come up with new ways to reach each student."

Participants also described personal fulfillment from witnessing learner progress. Participant 3 stated:

"For me, witnessing the progress of my learner with SEN is incredibly rewarding. Knowing that I'm making a difference in his life gives me a deep sense of fulfillment."

Participant 5 similarly shared:

"Seeing the learners grow, overcome challenges and achieve their goals is the most rewarding of my career."

These accounts described personal and professional experiences involving patience, understanding, flexibility, creativity, improved teaching approaches, and fulfillment from observing learners' progress.

7) Theme 7: Strengthening Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion

The seventh theme, Strengthening Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion, emerged from participants' descriptions of the assistance they received and the additional support they considered necessary. Participants mentioned school heads, co-teachers, SPED specialists, parents, local government, and the wider community as sources or potential sources of support.

Participant 1 stated:

"It would really help if I could get more training and assistance for handling SEN learners."

The participant also identified the need for stronger cooperation:

"It would also help if there were more support from SPED teachers and stronger cooperation between teachers, parents, and the school."

Participant 4 emphasized community and financial support:

"As to my observation and experiences, community support is lacking."

The participant further stated:

"I believe financial constraints can limit the ability of the school and parents to access resources and support services for learners with SEN."

Participant 5 described the need for school-based support:

"I lack support from school head and sped specialists in the implementation of inclusive education in school."

The participant also identified specific forms of support needed:

"As regular classroom teachers who implement inclusive education, we need proper trainings to educate and equip us of the necessary knowledge we need, we also need financial support and instructional materials for better implementation of inclusive education."

Participant 6, however, described receiving some assistance from colleagues and the school head:

"It was hard to handle a learner with special education needs without the proper training but my co teachers and school head helped me in managing this inclusion so it helped me in a way."

Participant 7 described the need for broader partnerships:

"There must be enough funding for resources, and specialized materials for better learnings. Providing teachers more opportunities in professional development about inclusive strategies to specific learners with SENs. There must be stronger partnerships between schools, families and communities as a support system."

Participant 8 similarly identified training, resources, mentoring, and specialized personnel:

"In my experience, providing teachers with training and resources on inclusive practices would make a big difference. This could include workshops, mentoring, and access to specialized support staff."

The participants' accounts therefore included both existing forms of assistance and requests for additional training, resources, professional collaboration, administrative support, parental involvement, and community participation.

D. Integration of Participants' Voices

Overall, the participants' narration in the seven themes painted a picture of inclusive education as something that was both good and hard. While the sample participants varied in grade level, years of teaching experience, and classroom contexts, there were several common patterns in the narratives. Differences were also apparent in the kinds of learners they managed, strategies used and support obtained.

Limited access to formal professional training and specialized support was a common theme for all the participants. All of the participants (1-8) indicated that they had no formal training in inclusive or special education. Yet, their reactions differed on how they coped with the situation. Some mentioned they depended on their own classroom experience and self-learning, others mentioned depending on co-teachers, school heads, parents, or on SPED personnel. For instance, participant 6 spoke of support from co-teachers and the school head, while participants 1, 2, 5, and 8 indicated that the support provided was insufficient or limited. These stories reveal a common lack of formal preparation and discrepancies in the supports to which they have access in their respective school experiences.

There was also a very positive attitude of the participants regarding inclusion. Throughout their stories, inclusion was linked to equal opportunities, acceptance, respect, participation and belonging. Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 described inclusion explicitly as equality, acceptance. This was supplemented by accounts of real-life classroom experiences where learners with SEN were supported to learn alongside their peers. The participants mostly had positive attitudes towards inclusion but they also stated that inclusion might be challenging for teachers, especially if the learners needed extra attention or support.

The participants' reporting also aligned in regard to the use of adaptive teaching strategies. Several narratives mentioned

differentiated instruction, visual aids, group activities, peer support, simplified instructions, additional time, hands-on activities, and alternative tasks. But with respect to the learners' needs the specific strategies fluctuated. For instance, Participants 6 and 8 wrote about strategies used for deaf learners, such as sign language, written instructions, visual materials and technology, and some of the participants wrote about strategies that focused on behavioral, learning, communication or participation needs. This variation shows how teachers adjusted their practices to the specific context of the learners they worked with.

A similar trend was found in regard to the participants' descriptions of inclusion and relationships with peers. Some of the participants indicated they used peer grouping, pairing, cooperative learning and buddy systems to facilitate interaction. All of the participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8) reported an experience with peer participation or interaction. The accounts also differed in some respects, however. Some learners were willing to join in group activities while others were hesitant to join in at first, had difficulty in interacting with others or were not getting along with other learners and were excluded from group activities. Participants 3 and 8 identified learners who were beginning to participate very little but were now joining in more. The following scenario was identified by Participant 7 where classmates started off having trouble working with a learner with SEN but that changed over time as a result of teacher guidance.

The participants' accounts also highlighted some obstacles and issues. The issues of lack of training were repeatedly mentioned; other issues mentioned were large class size, distractions in the classroom, behavioral issues, lack of resources, time demands, and inability to give individual attention. The nature of the challenges differed according to classroom circumstances. Participant 1 talked about distractions and keeping the class's focus, Participant 5 talked about the large class sizes and behavioral issues, and Participants 3 and 6 spoke about the challenges of working with learners without proper training. Participant 8 identified difficulties in communication and in engaging learners with varying needs. These accounts show that the participants had similar concerns, and they had similar experiences of concerns in various classroom situations.

Despite the challenges, the participants consistently described personal and professional growth through their experiences with inclusive education. Patience, understanding, flexibility, creativity, adaptability, and improved teaching practices were repeatedly mentioned. Participants 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 particularly described changes in their attitudes or teaching approaches. The participants also described satisfaction and fulfillment when learners made progress. Thus, while their experiences included difficulties, they also reported learning from their interactions with learners with SEN and from adapting their teaching practices.

The participants differed somewhat in their perceptions of institutional and community support. Some reported receiving assistance from school heads or co-teachers, while others described feeling that they were managing inclusion with little guidance. Participant 6 noted that co-teachers and the school head provided assistance, while Participant 7 described a supportive school head but limited resources and varying collaboration among colleagues. In contrast, Participants 2 and 8 described limited or inadequate guidance from SPED personnel and school leadership. Participants also identified parents and community members as potential sources of support, although the extent of parental and community involvement varied.

Taken together, the participants' voices demonstrate both convergence and variation in their experiences. Their accounts converged around the absence of formal training, positive views of inclusion, the use of adaptive teaching practices, the importance of peer interaction, the presence of classroom challenges, and the need for additional support. Meanwhile, their experiences were different based on the needs of the learners, the classroom context, the teaching context, and the support provided. Some participants spoke of improved support from colleagues and school heads and others spoke of being largely unsupported. Some children were very willing to take part in classroom activities and others needed ongoing encouragement and scaffolding.

As a whole, the integrated accounts describe inclusive education as an experience happening in the classroom, which is constantly adapted, responsive to the needs of the various learners, and interactive. The results are therefore based not on single participant's statements but on the common and varied experiences that have been shared in the eight narratives. The closeness of these descriptions offers a unity to the participants' experiences, and the variations show the diversity and complexity of inclusive education in a regular elementary classroom.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of section 4 are discussed and interpreted in detail in this section. It looks at experiences of regular classroom teachers in implementing inclusive education for students with special educational needs and at the interplay between the themes that emerged. The discussion contextualizes the results with appropriate theory and concepts and identifies the problems, strategies, support needs and continuing growth of the participants. In doing so, the chapter transcends description to offer valuable insights and implications for inclusive education practice, school support, policy and future research.

A. Analytical Treatment of Emergent Themes

The analysis of the emergent themes indicates an interrelated set of dynamics that express teachers' lived experiences in implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN). The seven themes – Limited Professional Training and Support, Positive Understanding of Inclusion, Adaptive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners, Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships, Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion, Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion, and Strengthening Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion – do not

exist as separate categories but rather in a relational pattern. They collectively illustrate how teachers' positive approaches to inclusion, their limited preparations, classroom challenges, adaptive responses, and the need to develop support systems interrelate. This interconnectedness is in line with recent debates on inclusive education and the importance of inclusive education not only being dependent on teachers' attitudes but also on their knowledge, capacity to educate, resources and access to collaborative support (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023).

Limited professional training and support show a clear directionality with the challenges and barriers in implementing inclusion. The majority of participants indicated that they received no formal training or special preparation in inclusive or special education. This unpreparedness went hand in hand with uncertainty and struggles to address the needs of various learners, especially in the areas of behavior, communication, participation and individual instruction. The participants also reported that large class sizes, lack of resources, lack of time and lack of SPED guidance were some of the factors that made the process of providing support more difficult. Therefore, the concern of limited preparation does not stand alone, but rather as a condition that helps shape teachers' experienced problems when working in the classroom.

Meanwhile, the results showed an inverse relationship between low levels of professional preparation and adaptive teaching strategies. Participants indicated that they were not formally trained, but they said they were able to come up with practical responses that they had experienced in their interactions with learners. These were differentiated instruction, visual aids, simplified instructions, more time, hands-on activities, peer tutoring, group work, alternative tasks, positive reinforcement, and technology. There was also a description of the use of written instructions, illustrations, visual material and sign language for participants who were working with learners with hearing or communication difficulties. These practices indicate that teachers did not take the lack of preparation passively, but instead did what they could to adapt their practices in response to the needs they saw in the learners. Teacher adaptability and differentiated practice are also included in recent literature as key factors in implementing inclusive practice (UNESCO, 2021).

It can also be seen that there is a reinforcing relationship between positive understanding of inclusion and adaptive teaching strategies. The majority of participants focused on the equality, acceptance, belonging, participation, and the right to education of every learner when considering inclusion. This positive attitude seemed to enable teachers to do more to meet the needs of learners with SEN, despite the challenges they faced. They demonstrated their commitment by being patient, encouraging, supporting peers, adjusting activities and not excluding learners from classroom experiences. In this way, teachers' understanding of inclusion offers the motivational context in which adaptations are made to the instruction. The results, however, also suggest that despite having positive attitudes, structural challenges exist and teachers can still have significant constraints in implementing inclusion.

The link between adaptive teaching and the social inclusion and peer relationships is also apparent. Teachers did not just aim for inclusion when it came to academic participation but also wanted learners with SEN to be engaged in group activities, cooperative learning, games, pair work and interactions within the classroom. A few of the participants spoke of some learners initially being hesitant to participate or being withdrawn, but with intentional pairing of students or organization of activities to give them meaningful roles, they were able to take part. Sometimes, regular learners were taught to communicate differently as well, such as learning sign language to communicate with a deaf learner in the same class. These accounts show how instructional adaptations can provide opportunities for social participation, and how positive peer interactions can, in turn, help learners feel a sense of belonging and participation.

This correlation, however, was not consistent among cases. Some participants indicated that learners with SEN were more than willing to engage with group activities while others noted withdrawal, hesitation, inability to communicate or reliance on the mood and comfort level of the learner. Teasing, exclusion, difficulty accepting a learner were also reported. These differences show that being in the same classroom does not necessarily create inclusion. It needs to be prompted by the teacher, it needs to be directed by peers, it needs to be supported by classroom routines, it needs to be a place where they can play a meaningful part.

An additional reinforcing dynamic occurs between teachers' experiences with learners and their personal and professional development. As they faced a variety of learners' needs, participants reported being more patient, compassionate, flexible, creative, understanding and adaptable. These experiences inspired them to take a fresh look at their teaching methods and to find ways to address individual differences. Significantly, this growth has happened in the presence of ongoing challenges not after all challenges have been "solved. Thus, the teacher professional learning included the process of responding to difficulties. The accounts of the participants indicate that inclusion is not just a responsibility for teachers, but also an experience that can help to develop their capacities as professionals.

The theme of strengthening institutional and community support for inclusion adds a wider contextual dimension to these relationships. Some of the participants were supported by school leaders, co-teachers, parents, or SPED staff, but the degree and quantity of support was different. The other participants highlighted one or more factors of low resources, limited collaboration, lack of SPED guidance, financial constraints, and need for more trained professionals, while some mentioned supportive school personnel. This variability indicates that pedagogical support available in the classroom has an impact on teachers' ability to enact inclusive practices. The need for coordinated support, teacher training, resources and collaboration at school level to maintain inclusive education is also highlighted in recent policy and international debates (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023).

A hierarchical relationship between the themes can thus be

found. Limited professional training and institutional support function as contextual and structural conditions; challenges and barriers represent the difficulties that emerge within classroom implementation; adaptive teaching strategies and social inclusion practices represent teachers' immediate responses; and personal and professional growth reflects an important outcome of sustained engagement with diverse learners. Meanwhile, positive understanding of inclusion operates across these levels by shaping teachers' willingness to persist and adapt, while institutional and community support can either strengthen or constrain their capacity to sustain these practices. This layered relationship illustrates that inclusive education is shaped by the interaction of individual teacher agency and the conditions in which teachers work.

Cross-case analysis further highlights both convergence and divergence among the participants. There was strong convergence in the recognition of the importance of inclusion and that it should be about equal opportunities, acceptance and participation for learners. There was a continuous theme of a need for further training, resources, and specialized support. But their experiences were different depending on the learner characteristics, the grade level, the classrooms, and the supports. Those working with deaf learners mentioned communication and visual means, and those working with learners with behavioral/social difficulties mentioned difficulties with participation, peer interaction and behavior management. While some participants reported supportive principals and co-teachers, others felt that collaboration and advice from specialists was not enough. These differences illustrate that teachers' experiences of inclusion are not one-size-fits-all.

At the core of these relationships is a basic mechanism of teacher adaptation within the frame of context of limited formal preparation. In the cases where teachers found themselves with learner needs, they didn't feel like they were well-equipped to respond to, they resorted to observation, experience, collaboration, experimentation, and constant tweaking. Thus, their answers reflected their own dedication and supports. Findings indicate that teachers very often took it upon themselves to identify practical classroom strategies, often in the absence of specialist advice or materials. This mechanism also contributes to the strong emergence of adaptive strategies and professional growth with the theme of limited training.

The interplay of the seven themes points to an ongoing dynamic of understanding learner diversity, adapting practice, fostering participation and belonging, challenging barriers and building professional capacity in the context of supports available. The findings show that teacher commitment to inclusion can foster creative and responsive practices, but that the sustained implementation cannot rely on individual teachers' efforts. The themes interweave and suggest a need for increased professional development, expert guidance, instructional materials, collaboration, and school-family-community support. These relationships are used as a solid basis for the subsequent interpretation of the findings and the proposed KAPIT-BISIG Framework for strengthening collaborative support for inclusive education.

B. Reflexivity and Triangulation Strategies

To enhance the credibility, depth and integrity of the findings, reflexivity and triangulation were used and actively engaged with throughout the analytical and interpretive phases of the study. These strategies were identified as methodological considerations in Chapter 3 but became more apparent when the actual analysis of the participants' narratives took place. Reflexivity was used to explore the potential for participant's experiences to be interpreted by the researcher's personal knowledge, background and professional experience related to inclusive education. On the other hand, triangulation allowed for comparisons to be made between the views of participants and to see if the data consistently confirmed or contradicted the emerging interpretations, or if it qualified and nuanced them.

C. Reflexive Engagement in the Analysis

The researcher was aware that as a researcher with a professional background in education there might be some pre-conceived notions regarding inclusive education, teacher readiness, classroom struggles, and the needs of learners with special educational needs. This professional awareness might have an impact on the understanding of participants' accounts or on the initial categorization of experiences as significant. This background was not viewed as separate from research process instead reflexivity was employed to critically deconstruct its impact on the interpretation of the data.

The researcher revisited the original interview transcripts and initial codes and emerging patterns during the analysis. Initial interpretations were compared to the actual narratives to check if the interpretation of the response was reflected in the participant's narrative. If an interpretation seemed to be something the researcher was anticipating rather than what the participant actually said, it was rethought and revised as needed. This process ensured there was a separation between the participants' communication and what the researcher originally thought was to be found.

Throughout the process of theming, analytical decisions, new questions and shifts in understanding were also captured in reflexive notes. For instance, the early negative impression of the limited formal training of the participants was challenged along the way. The narratives indicated that teachers were less well-prepared, though they also exhibited initiative, adaptability, creativity and a willingness to learn. Thus, the interpretation progressed from a perspective focused on teacher shortage to one with a balanced view of teachers as active actors in challenging settings where they have little preparation or support.

Reflexivity was also key in the discussion of the assumptions surrounding successful inclusion. The participants' descriptions shifted focus from grades and the ways students are adapted to the classroom to questions about belonging, peer relationships, participation, acceptance, and opportunities for interaction with their peers. This gave the researcher an increased understanding of the phenomenon and the themes were more fully developed from the lived experiences of the participants. This is a reflexive approach consistent with qualitative research perspectives, in which the researcher is an active part of the construction and

interpretation of the meaning of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2022; Merriam & Tisdell, 2021).

D. Triangulation based on Participants' Perspectives

The triangulation was carried out mostly by comparing the statements of the eight participants. Because the study was concerned with teachers' lived experiences, it was helpful to have a variety of perspectives to help make comparisons, and not rely on a single, isolated perspective. The researcher checked for uniformity of experiences in the participants and also noted the differences that could offer more meaning to the phenomenon.

A clear convergence was seen in many areas. Most participants reported limited or no formal training in inclusive or special education, expressed a positive understanding of inclusion, and identified the need for additional training, instructional resources, and specialized support. Participants also described adapting their teaching through differentiated activities, visual materials, peer support, group work, simplified instructions, additional time, and other strategies responsive to individual learner needs. These recurring patterns strengthened the basis for interpreting these experiences as significant features of teachers' implementation of inclusive education.

At the same time, triangulation allowed divergent experiences to remain visible. Participants differed in the specific challenges they encountered depending on the characteristics and needs of the learners they handled. For example, participants working with deaf learners emphasized communication barriers and the use of sign language, written instructions, and visual materials, while other participants described greater difficulties related to behavior, peer interaction, attention, or social participation. Differences were also evident in the level of assistance received from school heads, co-teachers, parents, and SPED personnel. These variations helped to resist uniformity in the experiences of teachers and to better develop an understanding of inclusion as context dependent.

E. Integration of Reflexivity and Triangulation

Reflexivity and triangulation were synergic in increasing the analytical rigor. The use of reflexivity ensured that there was an internal process of questioning the researcher's assumptions and the manner in which interpretations were formulated and the use of triangulation ensured multiple participant perspectives through which emerging interpretation could be compared and challenged. Patterns were explored with the individual narratives to see if the convergence was meaningful when it occurred more than once within the participants. Where discrepancies were identified, these were not assumed to be conflicting, but were contextualized within the framework of learner characteristics, classroom contexts and support available.

These processes resulted in final themes being developed from a continuous movement between the individual accounts and the collective data. Reflexive examination, which assisted in minimizing the imposition of interpretations merely by the researcher, and triangulation, which ensured that significant findings were given by more than one participant's perspective, were upheld. These strategies led to interpretations that were both contextualized in the teachers' lived experiences and aware of the commonalities and differences between each of the cases. They thus helped to bring the study more credibility and integrity and eventually laid a solid analytical ground on which to interpret the general connotation of inclusive education in the subsequent sections.

F. Interpretation to Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The study's results increase the knowledge base of the reality of inclusive education for learners with special educational needs (SEN) and the way regular classroom teachers live and practice it. The results, when viewed in the light of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) indicate that inclusive education is a complex, multifaceted process influenced by the environment, interpersonal relationships, classroom teaching practices, and the teacher's beliefs concerning the ability to respond to diverse students.

The three theoretical perspectives were complementary to each other in understanding the subjects' experiences. Bronfenbrenner's theory offers a view of system and environment, in which teachers and learners exist. In inclusive classrooms, social interaction, collaboration, scaffolding, and shared learning are essential, which are aspects of Vygotsky's theory. Bandura's theory can be a lens to understand teacher self-efficacy, observational learning, persistence, and teacher professional growth. If taken together, these theories provide insight as to why teachers' inclusive practices cannot only be interpreted in terms of their individual competence but should be interpreted within the social and institutional contexts in which teaching takes place.

G. Inclusive Education as a Process that is Ecological and Context Dependent

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is strongly supported by the theme Strengthening Institutional and Community Support for Inclusion and Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion. The participants' stories revealed that multiple layers of their environment impacted on their capacity to practice inclusive education.

At the microsystem level, teachers had direct contact with students, fellow teachers, parents and school leaders. The support of colleagues and school leaders affected teacher responses to learners with SEN, and sometimes it was difficult to implement because of a lack of collaboration between colleagues and between the teacher and parent. The participants' experiences thus depict Bronfenbrenner's idea that the development and functioning are influenced by direct interactions in immediate environments.

The connections between the various microsystems in the mesosystem level was especially apparent. Teachers, parents, school principals and those in charge of SPED, noted the need for coordination among them. Working together, teachers were more able to access support and information from these groups.

On the other hand, poor communication or poor collaboration resulted in gaps in support. Therefore, inclusion was not just a classroom duty but was a process influenced by the nature of the relationships between the people and settings that surround the learner.

The exosystem was manifested in the participants' experiences on limited professional development opportunities, insufficient resources, class size, the availability of SPED personnel, and administrative support. Not all of these conditions were directly under the control of classroom teachers, but they nevertheless had a significant impact on their daily work. The results, therefore, further corroborate the ecological view of the classroom in which teachers' classroom practices are influenced by organizational decisions and structures beyond the classroom.

Participants' conceptions of inclusion as equality, acceptance, respect, and the right to education are at the macrosystem level and represent overall social and educational values about inclusion. Inclusive education policies in the Philippines give a wider context on teacher's roles and responsibilities towards learners with SEN.

The chronosystem can be seen, finally, in the participants' descriptions of professional development and evolving experiences. Teachers shared their own views about their growing awareness, understanding, patience, flexibility and teaching styles as a result of their ongoing experience of learners with SEN. Their experiences indicate that inclusive practice evolves with experience and the teacher's reaction to new situations in the classroom.

The findings therefore build on the ecological perspective of inclusion, demonstrating the practice is not only the work of individual teachers, but of intertwined systems.

H. Social Interaction and Scaffolding of Inclusive Classrooms

The themes Adaptive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners and Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships are strongly explained by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Group work, peer pairing, co-operative learning, visual supports, differentiated instruction and extra help were often cited as strategies for supporting the participation of learners with SEN in the classrooms.

These practices are consistent with the sociocultural belief that learning is an outcome of engaging with more knowledgeable others and engaging in meaningful social activities. The teacher becomes a facilitator who gives different kinds of help according to learners' needs in inclusive classroom. Likewise, other pupils can also be sources of support when supporting learners with SEN in group activities or tasks supported by peers.

The experiences of the participants thus illustrate how scaffolding is used in inclusive classrooms. Teachers adapted lesson content, extended the lesson time, made tasks easier, made use of visual aids, and provided one-to-one help when necessary. The adaptations enabled learners to be able to engage in activities that may have been challenging without the support.

The results also broaden the use of Vygotsky's theory, in that they demonstrate that the social interaction is beneficial for not only the learner with SEN, but also for the other students and the teacher. Some of the participants indicated that regular learners enhanced their attitude of understanding, co-operating and accepting classmates with SEN when they interacted with them. Some students even acquired alternative communication methods like sign language to enable them to communicate.

The teachers too participated in socially mediated learning. Co-teachers, school heads, SPED personnel, parents and learners were mentioned as sources of learning. This implies that inclusive education requires a series of scaffolds, where both teacher and learner may be the target and source of support.

I. The Attitudes of Teachers and the Development of Inclusive Practice

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory can be understood and applied to the themes Limited Professional Training and Support and Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion. Commonly, participants reported receiving limited or no formal training in inclusive or special education. They overcame this and, over time, became more adaptable, patient and confident in their classroom experiences through which they developed strategies.

This is a consistent trend in line with Bandura's theory on reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 2002), which posits that there exists a reciprocal relationship between personal factors, behavior and environment. Teachers' confidence in their capacity to support the SEN student affected their willingness to experiment, and effective experiences seemed to boost their confidence and willingness to carry on adapting.

It seems that the mastery experiences were especially significant as reported by the participants. Teachers' experiences of seeing positive responses by a learner within a differentiated activity, or to participation in a group task, or to successful communication, or to learner progress, provided evidence that their efforts could make a difference. These experiences can boost teacher self-efficacy and inspire ongoing exploration and experimentation with inclusive strategies.

The results also support the observation learning theory of Bandura. The participants responded that they learned from their colleagues, SPED, school heads, parents and their learners. Formal training was scarce, but teachers became knowledgeable by observing, asking questions and sharing experiences, and reacting to situations that arose in the classroom.

The results thus indicate that the teacher professional development in the context of inclusive education is not simply a linear process from beginning to end, but rather a formal training process. Instead, it forms as a result of experience, observation, social support, reflection, and effective classroom practice.

J. Personal and Social Understanding of Inclusion in a Positive Way

Positive Understanding of Inclusion is a theme that is found

in all three theoretical perspectives. Teachers' beliefs about inclusion are shaped by the school and social context from an ecological point of view. These beliefs are manifested in relation, interaction and participation in a sociocultural perspective. Social cognitive viewpoint: beliefs can impact teacher's motivation to try and work through difficult circumstances.

Overall, participants referred to inclusion as equality, acceptance, respect, belonging, and opportunity. These positive understandings seemed to make teachers want to make changes even if they weren't formally prepared for them. Participants did not always see learner differences as barriers but tried to think about strengths and needs of the individual and how these could be addressed so that they could participate.

This indicates that teachers' beliefs play a significant role in linking the theoretical dimensions of the study. Positive attitudes towards inclusion can lead teachers to act in an adaptive way and a supportive environment and successful experiences can help to strengthen them.

K. Challenges presented as Interaction of Personal, Social and Environmental Factors

The complementary nature of the three theories can be seen in the theme Challenges and Barriers in Implementing Inclusion. Several factors are responsible for the difficulties faced by the participants.

From Bronfenbrenner's point of view, large classes, lack of resources, limited SPED personnel and insufficient institutional support are examples of contextual conditions in the larger educational context. Vygotsky's view would be that with limited access to collaboration and special guidance, opportunities for socially mediated learning and professional scaffolding are limited. Bandura's point would be that lack of training and not having positive experiences could impact the teacher's confidence in dealing with complex inclusive situations.

The results thus show that barriers to inclusion are individual and systemic. Even if the teacher has a positive attitude and is willing to adapt, he or she can have problems if the environmental supports are not adequate. On the other hand, high levels of institutional support can foster conditions where teachers can build confidence and more effective practices.

This interpretation is significant in that it does not rely solely on each individual teacher to be responsible for the success of inclusion. The findings indicate that efforts to improve inclusive education must be addressed simultaneously at the teachers' level, the social level, and the school level.

L. Inclusive Social Relationships and Peer Relations as a Co-Learning Process

The Promoting Social Inclusion and Peer Relationships theme is especially strong in supporting Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and relates to Bronfenbrenner and Bandura.

Participants shared instances where learners with SEN were withdrawn, excluded or reluctant to engage initially. For this reason, the teachers responded by organizing group activities, having learners work in pairs, giving meaningful roles to learners and encouraging the learners to help each other, and dealing with negative behaviors of learners. These practices afforded the learners opportunities to learn in a social context but not in isolation.

From Vygotsky's point of view, that interaction affords chances to learn together. Bronfenbrenner would argue that the classroom is a significant microsystem and that relationships have an impact on the involvement and growth of learners. Bandura's stance is that both learners and teachers can learn behaviors by observing and engaging with others.

M. Teacher Growth as a Reciprocal Process

The theme Personal and Professional Growth through Inclusion, too, shows the interaction between the three theories. These participants reported that due to work with learners with SEN, they were more patient, flexible, compassionate, creative and understanding. These changes were not just personal responses but shaped teacher pedagogy and relations with students after the initial experience.

This process can be explained in terms of mastery experiences and interaction between behaviors and personal beliefs according to Bandura's theory. Vygotsky's theory highlights the role of social interaction in teachers' learning, while Bronfenbrenner's theory situates this development within the changing contexts of classroom, school, family, and community relationships.

The findings therefore suggest that inclusive education creates a reciprocal developmental process. Teachers influence learners through their instructional and social practices, while their experiences with learners simultaneously influence teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and professional behavior.

N. Integration of the Three Theoretical Perspectives

The three theories provide complementary rather than competing explanations of the findings. Bronfenbrenner explains where and within what conditions inclusion occurs; Vygotsky explains how learning, participation, and support occur through social interaction; and Bandura explains how teachers' beliefs, experiences, observations, and behaviors influence their capacity to sustain inclusive practices**.**

The relationship among the theories can be represented as follows:

Ecological Systems → Social Interaction and Support → Teacher Practice and Self-Efficacy → Inclusive Classroom Experiences → Continued Growth and Adaptation

This relationship is consistent with the pattern identified across the seven themes. Teachers operate within multiple environmental systems that can either facilitate or constrain inclusion. Within these systems, they interact with learners, colleagues, families, and specialists. Through these interactions, they acquire knowledge, develop strategies, experience success or difficulty, and strengthen or question their confidence. These experiences then influence their subsequent classroom practices.

The findings therefore support the conceptual framework of the study by demonstrating that teachers' lived experiences

emerge from the interaction of context, relationships, practices, and personal development. The study does not indicate that any single theoretical framework is adequate to explain inclusive education. But rather, it is the interplay between the three theories that offers a more holistic account of the experiences of the participants.

The proposed KAPIT-BISIG Framework is based on the theoretical interpretation of the findings. Every theoretical perspective offers a unique but related aspect to the framework.

KAPIT-BISIG is based on the principle of inclusive education for coordinated support, as inspired by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The framework thus suggests cooperation among institutions and/or between institution and stakeholders instead of the responsibility of individual teacher.

KAPIT-BISIG draws from Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory which includes collaborative learning, peer support, mentoring, the sharing of inclusive practices, and professional interaction. These mechanisms offer a space for teachers and other stakeholders to learn from each other and to together respond to the needs of learners.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory has guided the incorporation of teacher capacity building, opportunities for teacher modeling and sharing of effective practice, collaborative problem solving, and experiences that can contribute to teacher confidence and perceived competence in implementing KAPIT-BISIG. The framework acknowledges that teacher practice of inclusive approaches is more likely to be sustained if they are provided with opportunities to learn, observe, practice, feedback and successful outcomes.

So, KAPIT-BISIG is the synthesis of the three perspectives. It sees that an enabling environment, socially supported practice and confident and capable teachers are essential to inclusive education.

O. Overall Theoretical Interpretation

The results overall support and expand the theoretical approach used in the study, showing that the implementation of inclusive education is a process that is dynamic, socially mediated and ecologically situated. The experiences of teachers are influenced by the systems that they are in, and are influenced by relating to learners and stakeholders, and evolving beliefs and competency.

Bronfenbrenner's theory explains how the wider environment and support systems have an impact; Vygotsky's theory explains how collaboration, scaffolding, and social participation has an impact; Bandura's theory explains how experiences, observations, beliefs, and perceived competence of teachers influence practice.

The results indicate that these processes are simultaneous. Limited institutional support can lead to more difficulties in the classroom, conversely, collaborative relationships can lead to teacher support and learning. Having positive relationships with learners can boost teachers' confidence, potentially leading to more adaptation of teaching. Better practices, in turn, can help to foster engagement and better relations within the classroom.

In sum, the study provides some theoretical insights into inclusive education and the interdependence of the interplay between environment, social interaction, and teacher's agency. Inclusive education cannot be realized through the efforts of teachers alone or through the policies and resources alone. It is realized through the work of competent and thoughtful teachers, relationships, responsive classroom practices, and enabling institutional and community systems.

This integrated interpretation offers the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the proposed KAPIT-BISIG Framework that distills the participants' lived experience and stated support needs into a context responsive school based collaborative support framework for strengthening inclusive education.

P. Insights, Contradictions, and Implications

This part offers a more nuanced analysis of the results by drawing out the main points, the main discrepancies and the overarching implications that arose from the participants' experiences. It goes beyond the description of themes to reflect on what these findings have to say about the reality of implementing inclusive education for learners with special educational needs. There is also a reflection on the aspects of their experiences that are shared or different, giving a more detailed insight into the challenges, supports and contextual factors that impact inclusive practice.

Q. Key Insights

Inclusive education is seen to be a challenge for professionals and an opportunity for teacher adaptation and development. Teachers' lack of formal preparation, lack of specialized training, lack of resources and the variety of learner needs make it hard to implement practice of inclusive education. Conversely, the challenges lead teachers to become more adaptive, reflective and resourceful in adapting their teaching styles, creating learner-centered approaches, and seeking assistance from fellow teachers, families and school stakeholders. The duality illustrates that teachers' experiences of inclusion do not only depend on the challenges faced, but also on their ability to adapt to and learn from them. The finding concurs with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which underscores that there is bidirectional interaction between personal factors, behavioral and environment in the formation of professional practice.

A crucial finding of the study is that inclusive education is not exclusively the responsibility of a single teacher, it is a relational and ecological process created by collaboration and mutual support. Teachers are still the key actors in responding to the immediate needs of the learners; however, the sustainment of inclusive practices depends on relationships with school leaders, colleagues, parents and other actors. This finding adds to the understanding of inclusion by raising the awareness of the interrelated environments where teaching and learning happen for learners with special education needs for meaningful participation. In line with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, the results indicate that the distribution of support across the school, home, and community enhances the

effectiveness of the teacher and the involvement of learners.

Overall, the findings indicate that the inclusion of sustainable development is not a matter for the individual teacher alone but must be based on collective responsibility and coordinated action. The interplay of teachers' high stakes in inclusion and the lack of support structures in place highlights that teacher resilience alone is not a substitute for systematic professional development, collaborative structures, resources available, and stakeholder participation. The study therefore emphasizes the need of shifting individual teacher experiences and adaptive practices towards institutionalized collective action and knowledge. This insight serves as a basis for the conceptualization of the KAPIT-BISIG framework, where inclusive education is a journey of collaboration between the teacher and stakeholders to remove barriers and increase supports to make learning environments more responsive for learners with special education needs.

R. Contradictions and Tensions

The results show that there is a large mismatch between the policy vision of inclusive education and teacher experiences in classrooms. Inclusive education encourages equitable participation and appropriate support for learners with special education needs, but the experiences of the participants showed that teachers are expected to address a variety of learning needs, in spite of limited formal preparation, lack of relevant specialized training and limited resources and support. This leaves a disconnect between the concept of inclusion as a system-wide commitment and as a responsibility mainly at the classroom level. The contradiction is analytically important since teachers are very willing to make adaptations for learners with SEN, but the conditions to support this are not always available.

A second tension becomes apparent: between teacher coping and institutional accountability. Participants showed adaptability, creativity and commitment to meeting the needs of learners, and were able to find ways to change instruction and support learners individually where necessary and possible. This is a sign of teachers' professional agency, but also a concern when resilience takes the place of systemic support. The willingness of teachers to cover for shortfalls in training, resources and specialized support can help inclusive practices to continue but can also be an undue burden on an individual teacher. This implies, from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, that problems at the classroom level must be understood in light of the systems in which teachers and learners operate.

There is also seen to be a tension between the individuality of the needs of learners and the uniformity of school structures. It was identified that the experiences of the participants showed that approaches for learners with SEN need to be differentiated, flexible and varied. But teachers work under the context of prescribed curricula, assessment programs, classroom structures and routines, and institutional expectations that do not necessarily support the full spectrum of learner differences. This tension could be seen as a problem that arises in the implementation of the principle of individualized support in the classroom. The findings indicate that, as predicted by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, learners' development is enhanced with responsive social and instructional support which, however, is affected by the resources and interactions provided in the learning environment.

Such tensions do not necessarily mean that inclusive education has gone wrong. Instead, they illustrate the challenges of implementing inclusive principles. The results indicate that inclusion is not only facilitated by teachers' agency but also is limited by the context in which it works. This is significant because, in order to improve inclusion, it is essential to focus not just on teacher competence and commitment, but also on the institutional mechanisms that facilitate or hinder their practice.

S. Implications for Practice, Policy and Future Research

The findings indicate that inclusive education is a more complex issue than the commitment and adaptability of teachers. Teacher's continuous, situation-specific professional development, opportunities to collaborate with peers, and support from the school leader, peers, family, and other stakeholders are all necessary. It is good practice to allow opportunities for peer mentoring, collaborative planning, exchange of strategies and problem solving to address varied needs within a school. This can turn individual teacher experiences into collective professional knowledge and mitigate the idea that the classroom teacher's role is to take responsibility for inclusion.

The results indicate the need to reinforce the support of implementation of inclusive education policies. The policies provide a strong expectation for equity of participation and support for learners with SEN, but experiences of teachers also suggest that, for effective implementation, training, resources, specialized support, and coordination procedures are necessary. Policy initiatives should therefore be more context responsive than merely formal compliance, reflecting the fact that there are variations in school capacity and learner needs. Enhancing the cooperation between the schools and other agencies may also contribute to share responsibility for inclusion at a broader level within the educational system.

The results offer possibilities for further research on inclusive education from various angles. In future research, school leaders, parents, learners with SEN and other stakeholders could be studied to investigate whether there were similarities or differences between the experiences of teachers and those of other stakeholders. Studies can also explore the impact of collaborative professional development and support strategies and explore the transferability of the KAPIT-BISIG framework to other schools and settings. Future studies of a longitudinal and intervention nature can also provide more information about the effects of ongoing support on teachers' capabilities, pedagogy, and ability to offer meaningful and sustainable inclusion opportunities.

6. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This section provides the summary of the study, conclusions based on findings and recommendations based on the

experiences of the elementary school teachers in supporting learners with special education needs. It summarizes the key results in response to the research questions and draws out the significance and implications of the research. The conclusions are based on the experiences of the participants and the theories that guided the inquiry, and the recommendations are designed to guide teachers, school leaders, as well as policymakers, stakeholders and future researchers in strengthening inclusive practices and supports.

A. Summary of Findings

This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of elementary school teachers in inclusive contexts who provide special education services to learners with special education needs (SEN). Analysis of the participants' narratives yielded a number of themes and ideas regarding their experiences, problems, coping strategies and their needs for capacities to enhance inclusive education. The major findings are presented based on the research questions of the study.

1) Teachers' Experiences in Supporting Learners with SEN

The results showed that inclusive education was a challenge for the teachers but also very professionally enriching. They showed dedication to addressing the needs of learners in their care through adaptation of teaching, one to one support, diverse approaches and classroom settings. They also shared their experiences of patience, understanding, flexibility and learning. Even if teachers were not formally trained in inclusive or special education, they gained experience through their classrooms, working together, and through reflection.

2) Challenges Encountered by Teachers

Teachers identified some challenges to using inclusive practice. These encompassed lack of training and knowledge of SEN; diverse learner needs; lack of resources and instructional materials; difficulties in classroom management; time limitations; and limited access to specialized support. These findings indicated that despite such restrictions teachers had to make adaptations and develop alternative strategies. So, the problems encountered were not only teaching problems, but also organizational and systemic problems.

3) Strategies Used by Teachers in Addressing the Challenges

Although the challenges faced, teachers were able to show adaptability, creativity and resourcefulness in supporting learners with SEN. They utilized differentiated instruction, individualized assistance, peer support, classroom modifications, communication with parents, and consultation with colleagues. Reflection and experience were also used by teachers to decide on the suitability of strategies for specific learners.

These practices illustrated teachers as active rather than passive actors in the process of implementing the demands of inclusion.

4) Support Needed to Strengthen Inclusive Education

The study concluded that teachers' commitment and adaptability are important strengths in implementing inclusive education, but these strengths are best achieved in the context of proper institutional structures. Results indicated that there was an ongoing conflict between the inclusive education ideals and the classroom realities, including teacher preparation, resources, and special supports. Thus, the study indicates that, in order to achieve meaningful and sustainable inclusion, it is necessary to move away from individual teacher accommodation and towards collective responsibility, collaboration and coordinated support.

5) Overall Synthesis of the Findings

Based on these findings, the conclusions and recommendations presented in the following sections of this chapter were developed and serve as the basis for the development of the KAPIT-BISIG framework as a collaborative approach to strengthening inclusive education practices

These findings provide the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the succeeding sections of this chapter and support the development of the KAPIT-BISIG framework as a collaborative approach to strengthening inclusive education practices.

B. Conclusions Derived from Participants' Voices and Literature

The results of the study have been analyzed based on the synthesis of the participants' lived experiences, findings of the study, and the results of the analysis based on theoretical and scholarly views, as follows:

1. Inclusive education is experienced by teachers as both a challenge and an opportunity for professional growth. The participants showed commitment, flexibility, and resourcefulness in dealing with the wide variety of the needs of the learners with special education needs. Through their experiences, teachers have gained insights into the practical aspects and confidence, which comes with engaging with learners continuously, reflecting and adapting. This fits with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which focuses on the interaction between personal capabilities, behavior, and the environment, all of which impact learning and professional practice.
2. Teachers' capacity to implement inclusive practices is influenced by the availability of preparation, resources, and institutional support. Teacher preparation, resources and institutional supports have an impact on their ability to practice inclusive education. While participants expressed a desire to accommodate learners with SEN, there were very few formal professional development, resources, and access to specialized support, which was a barrier to maintaining inclusive practices. Therefore, the results show that teacher commitment alone cannot meet the needs of inclusion. Effective inclusion means having an enabling environment to help teachers work out how to put inclusive principles into practice in their classrooms.
3. Inclusive education is fundamentally relational and collaborative. The experiences of the participants show that SEN teachers cannot work alone to support learners with SEN. Teachers' practice of

understanding and responding to learners' needs is supported by collaboration with school leaders, colleagues, parents and other stakeholders. This conclusion is in line with the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner who made it a point to focus on the interaction and influence of the various layers of the learner's environment both immediate and larger, and with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasized the importance of social interaction and support in learning and development.

4. Teachers exercise significant agency in negotiating the gap between inclusive education policy and classroom realities. Teachers have a great deal of autonomy to negotiate the tensions between the policy and practice of inclusive education and classroom practice. Participants did not merely adopt practices; they flexibly and creatively made use of strategies based on the needs of the learners, available resources, and classroom situations. Their experiences show that inclusive education is actively built in the daily decisions and interactions that are made. On the other hand, this agency should not be seen as a replacement for systemic support as it is problematic if the school becomes dependent on individual teacher resilience and this leads to uneven implementation and greater professional demands.
5. Sustainable inclusion requires a shift from individual responsibility to shared responsibility. The results confirm that meaningful inclusion is enhanced through teachers, school leaders, families and other stakeholders' involvement in supporting learners with SEN. It therefore finds that inclusive education is not just a classroom issue but is a collective responsibility of the school and community and it needs to be responded to with coordinated action, lifelong learning and supportive systems.
6. The study contributes to the understanding of inclusive education by emphasizing the importance of collective action grounded in teachers' lived experiences. The study helps to deepen an understanding of inclusive education and highlights the need for collective action based on teachers' experiences. The voices of the participants and the theoretical standpoint have indicated that inclusion can be more sustainable when teachers' agency is enabled and sustained by collaborative relationships and enabling institutional conditions. This synthesis is the underpinning of the KAPIT-BISIG framework where inclusive education is conceptualized as a collective process where teachers and stakeholders collaborate to resolve barriers, enhance support, and foster meaningful participation of learners with SEN.

Overall, the study suggests that while teachers are able and willing to play an inclusive education role, it is more meaningful and sustainable when supported by preparation, resources, collaboration and institutional support. The lived experiences of the participants illustrate that inclusion is not realized simply because teachers work for it; rather it is continually built through the joint commitment of the school and its broader community.

C. Practical Output(s) of the Study

This study concludes with the KAPIT-BISIG Framework, a proposed collaborative support framework in schools based on teachers' experiences, issues, and support needs in implementing inclusive education for learners with special education needs (SEN). KAPIT-BISIG translates to 'holding arms together' or to work hand in hand, and this is the essence of the framework: inclusive education is a shared responsibility, one that requires collaboration, compassion and collective action.

The KAPIT-BISIG Framework aims to build teachers' readiness, confidence and capacity to meet learners' needs in a variety of ways and create an atmosphere of mutual support among teachers and school community. It understands that inclusive practice is not the responsibility of teachers alone and encourages all stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, parents, learners and others, to support learners with SEN.

The framework has a series of interrelated elements that address the needs that emerged from the study: (1) capacity building and professional development; (2) inclusive teaching strategies and sharing of resources; (3) collaborative support and consultation; (4) parent and stakeholder engagement, and (5) monitoring and continuous improvement. These are manifested through professional learning activities, workshops, mentoring, reflective sessions, peer collaboration, Learning Action Cell (LAC) based learning, resource sharing, consultation and regular monitoring of inclusive practices.

The framework also includes important areas of teacher development, stemming from the participants' experiences, such as pedagogical planning, instructional adaptation and differentiation, collaborative practices and partnerships, inclusive classroom management, empathy and emotional resilience, and continuous reflection and community involvement. These areas are practical spaces for embedding teacher experiences, identifying needs and challenges, and then taking action(s) and sustained professional learning.

In a practical manifestation, KAPIT-BISIG can be manifested in the implementation guide, professional learning activities, resource-sharing mechanisms, collaborative support sessions and monitoring tools that can be adapted by schools based on their context and available resources. It is designed to complement and not supplant the DepEd programs and policies in inclusive education.

Finally, KAPIT-BISIG provides a concrete and collaborative response to the main finding of the study, that the vision of sustainable inclusion is not solely a matter of teachers. The framework aims to build a more responsive school environment through shared knowledge, coordinated support, continuous reflection and meaningful stakeholder participation, that will allow learners with SEN to participate, belong and learn in a more sustainable approach.

The framework is detailed and operational with a full diagram, implementation procedures, and supporting tools

Table 1
Program matrix of "KAPIT-BISIG: Empowering teachers for inclusive education

Framework Component	Objectives	Proposed Activities / Strategies	Time Frame	Persons Involved	Expected Outcomes
1. Pedagogical Planning	• Strengthen teachers' ability to plan inclusive lessons that cater to diverse learner needs.	• Workshop on Differentiated Lesson Planning • Training on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and alignment with MELCs • Collaborative lesson design sessions	Month 1	School Heads, Master Teachers, SPED Coordinators	diversity and accessibility
2. Instructional Adaptation and Differentiation	• Equip teachers with strategies for modifying instruction and assessment to meet individual needs.	• Demonstration lessons on differentiated teaching • Development of adaptive learning materials • Peer mentoring sessions	Month 2	SPED Teachers, Resource Speakers, Regular Teachers	Teachers effectively implement differentiated and flexible instructional strategies.
3. Collaborative Practices and Partnerships	• Build strong partnerships among teachers, parents, and community stakeholders.	• Team-teaching projects with SPED and general education teachers • Parent-school collaboration meetings • Partnership workshops with LGUs and NGOs	Month 3	Teachers, Parents, Guidance Counselors, LGUs, NGOs	Strengthened teacher-parent-community collaboration supporting inclusive learning.
4. Inclusive Classroom Management	• Enhance teachers' capacity in managing diverse learners and promoting positive behavior.	• Seminar on Positive Discipline and Socio-Emotional Learning • Role-playing and case analysis on behavioral scenarios • Creation of inclusive classroom rules	Month 4	School Counselors, SPED Teachers, Guidance Advocates	Improved classroom climate fostering respect, inclusion, and student engagement
5. Empathy and Emotional Resilience Building	• Develop teachers' emotional intelligence, self-care, and empathy toward learners with SEN.	• Reflection and mindfulness workshops • Stress management sessions • Sharing of inspirational teacher experiences	Month 5	School Heads, Psychologists, Peer Mentors	Teachers demonstrate emotional stability, compassion, and resilience in handling challenges.
6. Continuous Reflection and Community Involvement	• Sustain professional growth and community collaboration for inclusion.	• Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions focused on inclusion • Documentation of best practices • Community outreach and advocacy events on inclusive education	Month 6 and Continuous	Teachers, School Heads, LGUs, NGOs, DepEd Division Office	Established culture of reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement in inclusive education.

provided in the Appendices.

D. Implications for Practice, Policy, and Future Research

The implications of the findings for better practice in inclusive education, for the strengthening of educational policy and for future research are discussed. It indicates the lessons learned from teachers' experiences that can inform practical interventions, institutional support and policy development, and the areas that require further research.

E. Implications for Practice

The results suggest that inclusive education needs to be given a boost by system-based support in schools instead of depending on individual teachers. Continuous professional development of teachers on differentiated instruction, classroom management, learner assessment and strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners. School heads can create regular opportunities for mentoring, peer collaboration, Learning Action Cells, consultation and sharing of inclusive teaching resources. The KAPIT-BISIG Framework could be used as a concrete tool for implementing these activities and for improving collaboration among teachers, school administration, parents and other stakeholders. It can be modified in accordance with each school's needs, resources, and capacities.

F. Implications for Policy

The results highlight the need to support Inclusive education policies with clear implementation mechanisms, sufficient resources, ongoing teacher preparation, and specialized support that is both available and accessible. Professional development, instructional supports, and opportunities for collaboration between schools, families, and relevant service providers can be done in a way that is context responsive to strengthen school level systems of support. Implementation of policy can also account for differences in the capacities and needs of schools, as well as a one-size-fits-all approach. The KAPIT-BISIG Framework could offer a school-level model which could be used alongside existing inclusive education policies to translate broad policy commitments into coordinated and context

specific actions.

G. Implications for Future Research

Further studies could involve implementing and evaluating the success of the KAPIT-BISIG Framework in various schools and educational settings. Researchers can explore whether this schema helps to enhance teacher readiness, inclusive pedagogy, cooperation and involvement of students. Other stakeholders such as school heads, parents, learners with SEN and other might also be involved in further studies to get a wider picture of inclusive education. Longitudinal and intervention studies can be conducted to find out how ongoing professional development and collaborative support can affect teachers' practices and the ongoing implementation of inclusive education. These studies could further develop KAPIT-BISIG as a context responsive approach to bolstering inclusive education.

H. Recommendations for Further Inquiry

On the basis of the findings, conclusions, and areas needing further investigation, the following recommendations are proposed as a result:

1. Validation and pilot implementation of the KAPIT-BISIG Framework can be done in selected Elementary Schools to check the feasibility, relevance, acceptability and effectiveness of the framework in enhancing the capacity of the teachers in supporting the children with special education needs.
2. A mixed-methods or quasi-experimental study may be conducted to explore the effects of the KAPIT-BISIG before and after implementation on the teachers' knowledge, confidence, inclusive pedagogy, and collaboration with stakeholders.
3. Other groups could be added for future research, such as school heads, parents, learners with SEN, special education teachers, guidance personnel and other stakeholders. Their experiences might help to better understand the factors that support or hinder inclusive education.
4. Comparative studies may be conducted across different schools, districts, or divisions to check if teachers experience similar challenges and support needs and to identify contextual factors that influence the implementation of inclusive education.
5. Longitudinal research could be conducted to explore the changes in teachers' knowledge, attitudes, confidence and inclusive practice over time, especially after extended professional development and collaborative support within the school.
6. Future research could examine specific professional development supports for differentiated instruction, classroom management, adaptation of assessment, behavior support and other skills that were deemed significant in meeting the needs of learners with SEN. This can be used to identify the most effective and sustainable professional learning.
7. Future studies might include finding out more about the views and experiences of pupils with SEN and their families, especially their views on participation, belonging, teacher support and barriers to participation in the classroom. This type of inquiry can help supplement the findings of the current study, which are teacher-centric and can offer a more learner- and family-centered perspective of inclusive education.
8. Future researchers could further develop and theoretically analyze KAPIT-BISIG Framework by determining the basic components, relationship, conditions and measurable outcomes of the framework. Further research can provide supporting evidence to inform its adoption/adaptation as a framework in schools for the strengthening of inclusive education.

In general, more research is needed to go beyond the problems of inclusive education, to test, develop and assess solutions. A systematic study of the KAPIT-BISIG Framework may offer empirical evidence of the extent to which collaborative supports in the school setting can be transformed into sustainable practices that will support learners with special education needs from teachers' commitment to inclusion.

I. Final Reflections of the Study

This research started with the question of what it is like to be an elementary school teacher whose student has a special education need in an inclusive classroom. The study aimed to gain insight into the problems faced by teachers and also how teachers make sense of these problems, how teachers are dealing with the variety of needs of learners, and what teachers are doing to keep themselves engaged with the issue of inclusion. The voices of those participating pointed to the inclusive education as a deeply human and relational endeavor, not just a pedagogical one but also a relationship, a professional judgement, collaboration, and a commitment to staying with the learner in education.

The value of the study is that it views teachers as professionals who interpret, negotiate, and apply meaning to inclusive education in their daily lives, and not just as implementers of inclusive education policies. They show that inclusive education can only take place if the teacher is competent but also if the conditions are right in which teachers operate. This knowledge adds to the conversation about inclusion and highlights the link between teacher agency, institutional support, and collective responsibility.

The study also enriched the researcher's understanding of the process of inclusion as opposed to inclusion as a state. As part of the research journey, it was found that meaningful inclusion is not just about learners with SEN in mainstream classrooms. It is evidenced by the degree of understanding, support, engagement and meaningful opportunities for participation that learners receive. This realization will serve as a reminder of the need to listen to teachers' lived experiences as a source of knowledge for informing change in educational practice and enhancing support systems.

The KAPIT-BISIG Framework is the concrete manifestation of this understanding. It reflects the core understanding that

shared responsibility and strong collaboration between teachers and school leaders, families, peers and other stakeholders, foster sustainable inclusion. The contribution of the study is thus taken beyond understanding teachers' experiences in order to create a platform for joint action.

Finally, this study confirms that inclusive education is a commitment to education, and a responsibility of society. Perhaps most importantly, its influence is the idea that teacher experiences are valued, teacher capacities are developed and collective responsibility for supporting diverse learners is established to make the work of inclusion more sustainable. The study thus concludes with the awareness that meaningful inclusion does not happen in isolation but in a community that is willing to kapit-bisig—to "hold together, to learn together, to go forward together" to an education system where every learner belongs, participates and flourishes.

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