

# Teachers' Leadership Management and Competence in Promoting Inclusive Learning Education

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## Abstract

The study investigated how teachers' leadership and competence influence the promotion of inclusive education within the Department of Education in Camarines Norte, Philippines. It explored the implementation of principles such as learner-centered, developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, relevant, gender-responsive, and curriculum-contextualized education. Additionally, it examined the correlation between teachers' competence, including trainings, academic requirements, and resources, and their ability to implement inclusive education practices. The research also identified challenges faced by teachers and proposed strategies to enhance the implementation of inclusive learning education.

The findings revealed a high level of commitment among teachers toward implementing inclusive practices across various dimensions, such as learner-centered approaches, cultural sensitivity, and curriculum contextualization. However, areas for improvement were identified, such as tailoring instruction to specific developmental stages and collaborating with specialists in curriculum adaptation. The study unveiled a strong positive correlation between teacher competence, particularly in trainings and academic background, and the implementation of inclusive principles. Challenges hindering the effective promotion of inclusive education included resource constraints, lack of parental support, and limited shared accountability. To address these challenges, a multi-pronged approach was recommended, encompassing comprehensive teacher training, stakeholder collaboration, accessible infrastructure, resource provision, curriculum modifications, and awareness campaigns. The researcher proposed "PROJECT We Rise" to establish the "Alliance for Inclusive Education" (AIE) to advocate for and support inclusive education in SSES elementary schools in Camarines Norte.

*Keywords:* Inclusive Education Principles, Teachers' Competence, Resource Limitations, Multi-Pronged Approach, Professional Development Programs

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## 1. Introduction

Inclusive education, a global movement championed by UNESCO (2017), is founded on human rights, social justice, equity, and diversity principles. Ainscow et al. (2006) and Florian (2014) contribute significantly to its conceptual framework, emphasizing the recognition and support of unique strengths and needs in learners. This philosophy transcends educational strategy, becoming a societal transformation catalyst and fostering a culture of respect, collaboration, and belonging among students, teachers, and families (Booth and Ainscow, 2011; Mitchell, 2015).

Booth and Ainscow (2011) and Mitchell (2015) underscore that inclusive education benefits the entire school community, creating a positive ethos and nurturing social cohesion. It goes beyond equal access to

education, transforming traditional paradigms to celebrate diversity and engender a profound sense of belonging within the school community. The interconnectedness fostered by inclusive education is crucial for cultivating an educational ecosystem where every participant, regardless of differences, is recognized, valued, and actively engaged in the learning journey.

Despite the undeniable benefits of inclusive education, its successful implementation is not without hurdles. A critical determinant of success or failure in this endeavor lies in the hands of school leadership, a factor extensively highlighted in existing literature (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; MacBeath et al., 2006; Ryan, 2006). School leaders are responsible for crafting a vision and policy for inclusive education, offering vital direction for teachers and staff. Additionally, they play a pivotal role in allocating necessary resources, providing support, and offering guidance to ensure the translation of inclusive education principles into practical classroom strategies (Ainscow et al., 2012; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Riehl, 2000).

Beyond logistical support, school leaders significantly shape the broader school culture and climate, wielding influence over the attitudes and behaviors of both teachers and students toward inclusion (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; Schein, 2010). Their impact resonates in the institution's ethos, determining whether inclusivity becomes ingrained in the educational fabric or remains a distant ideal. The intricate interplay between leadership, policy, and practice underscores the multifaceted role of school leaders in steering the course toward successful inclusive education, making their influence a linchpin in the journey toward educational equity and diversity.

Teachers are the frontline agents of inclusive education, as they are directly involved in the teaching and learning of diverse students in the classroom (Black-Hawkins, 2010; Jordan et al., 2010; Loreman et al., 2010). Teachers' ability to foster an inclusive learning environment depends on their knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes toward inclusion, as well as their pedagogical practices and strategies (Avramidis et al., 2000; Forlin et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2008). Teachers also need adequate support from school leaders, colleagues, parents, and external agencies to overcome the barriers and challenges they face in implementing inclusive education (Alsubaie, 2015; Ekins, 2016; Villa et al., 2005).

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education in the global context, there is limited research on how it is understood and practiced in different countries and cultures (Artiles et al., 2006; Slee, 2011). In particular, there is a need for more studies on inclusive education in developing countries, where there are often limited resources, policies, and capacities to support it (Ainscow et al., 2013; Miles and Singal, 2010). One such country is the Philippines, where inclusive education has been promoted by various government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international partners since the early 1990s (DepEd Order No. 72 s.1992; UNESCO-APNIEVE Philippines Network Foundation Inc., n.d.). However, there is still a gap between policy and practice, as many schools struggle to provide quality education for all students, especially those with special educational needs (SEN) (Balisnomo et al., 2017; Dizon-Ross et al., 2020; Laoire et al., 2020).

These schools have been implementing various programs and initiatives to promote inclusive education for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), such as early identification and assessment, individualized educational plans, curriculum differentiation, assistive technology, teacher training, parent involvement, peer support, referral system, and networking with other stakeholders (DepEd Division of Camarines Norte, n.d.). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness and challenges of these efforts, and how they relate to the leadership and competence of the teachers. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the views and experiences of teachers and school leaders in these schools regarding inclusive education. The findings of this study may offer insights and implications for policy and practice, as well as suggestions for future research.

### *1.1. Objective of the Study*

The essence of this study delves into the pivotal role of teachers' leadership and competence in fostering inclusive education—a fundamental right and educational objective for all learners, irrespective of

their diverse backgrounds. It scrutinizes the application of inclusive education principles by educators, their preparedness, resource availability, and how these factors interplay with their professional practice. The investigation further probes into the challenges teachers face in this endeavor and the potential solutions they can employ to surmount these obstacles.

The research meticulously examines the extent to which teachers embody inclusive education through learner-centered, developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, relevant, gender-responsive, and curriculum-contextualized teaching practices. It evaluates the teachers' proficiency, considering their training, academic qualifications, and resources at their disposal. The study seeks to uncover the significant connections between teachers' competencies and their practical application of inclusive education principles. It also aims to identify the barriers that impede the promotion of inclusive learning and to devise strategic interventions and recommendations that could enhance the implementation of these educational principles, thereby contributing to the advancement of inclusive learning environments.

## **2. Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to provide an accurate description of teachers' implementation of inclusive education principles, competence in promoting inclusive education, challenges faced, and solutions suggested, as well as to investigate the relationship between teachers' competence and their implementation of inclusive education principles in Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES). The study employed surveys, interviews, and observations as qualitative approaches to collect rich and diverse data from teachers and students, enabling data triangulation. Data analysis methods included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and thematic analysis to summarize, organize, interpret, and identify patterns, themes, and associations in the collected data. Ethical considerations were prioritized by obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, securing data storage, and restricting access to data. Respondents' identities were protected, and personal identifiers were removed and replaced with codes to maintain anonymity throughout the research process.

### *2.1. Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique*

This study focused on Special Education (SpEd) teachers from grades 1-6 who teach in the Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) program in the Division of Camarines Norte, Philippines. The sample consisted of all 47 SpEd teachers from three elementary schools - Daet Elementary School (urban, with SSES for over 4 years), Labo Elementary School (suburban, with SSES for 3 years), and Vinzons Pilot Elementary School (rural, with SSES since 2011) - that offered diverse educational contexts and had been running the SSES program for more than a year. A total enumeration sampling technique was employed, involving the examination of the entire well-defined population of 47 SpEd teachers and 3 principals (one from each school), to ensure a representative, comprehensive, accurate, and reliable sample. The SSES program aims to provide inclusive education for learners with special needs through appropriate curriculum, instruction, assessment, and support services, with SpEd teachers handling different grade levels and teaching arrangements across the selected schools.

### *2.2. Data Gathering Procedures*

The research process commenced by obtaining necessary permissions from relevant authorities while prioritizing ethical considerations and respondents' rights. The researcher formally requested permission from the Department of Education - Schools Division Office of Camarines Norte, outlining the study's purpose, scope, and ethical protocols. Subsequently, data on SSES teachers and schools were acquired to identify potential respondents. School district heads were then approached for official approval to conduct the study

within their jurisdiction. Potential respondents were personally contacted, and informed about the study's details, and their voluntary participation was requested. A dry run of the questionnaire was conducted with 20 non-respondents from the three selected SSES schools to ensure validity. Ethical measures included informing respondents about participation risks, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining consent for recorded interviews, acknowledging their right to withdraw or refuse sensitive questions, and communicating the study's benefits. This meticulous approach to securing permissions, respondent consent, and upholding ethical principles laid the foundation for a successful and valid data-gathering process, which was conducted in person while maintaining trust and cooperation with respondents.

### 2.3. Statistical Treatment of Data

The data collected from respondents were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS software. Descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation summarized respondent characteristics, competence levels, and implementation of inclusive education principles across six dimensions (learner-centered, developmentally appropriate, culture-sensitive, relevance, gender-responsive, and curriculum contextualization). Inferential statistics, such as the Likert-type scale, Pearson correlation, and frequency, tested hypotheses and answered research questions based on variable types and measurement levels.

To assess the extent of inclusive education principle implementation (SOP 1) and teacher competence in promoting inclusive education (SOP 2), Likert-type scales were employed. The implementation scale ranged from 1 (Not Implemented) to 5 (Always Implemented), while the competence scale spanned 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) across relevant trainings, academic requirements, and resources. Means and standard deviations were computed and compared across the urban (Daet Elementary School), suburban (Labo Elementary School), and rural (Vinzons Pilot Elementary School) areas. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient determined the relationship between teacher competence and inclusive education principle implementation (SOP 3). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is represented by the formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum(y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Frequency analysis identified the challenges faced by teachers in promoting inclusive learning education (SOP 4). Strategies to enhance inclusive education implementation (SOP 5) were developed based on data analysis and literature review, incorporating respondent suggestions and evidence from successful cases. The proposed interventions (SOP 6) aim to address identified gaps and challenges, facilitating more effective application of inclusive education methodologies, formulated based on the study's empirical findings and outcomes.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1. Implementation of Inclusive Education Principles

The study aimed to reveal potential variances or parallels in the application of inclusive education principles across different school environments. Analysis of the learner-centered domain showed a high weighted mean of 4.90, reflecting consistent implementation. Teachers encouraged active and collaborative participation, though engaging all students scored slightly lower at 4.78, suggesting room for improvement in ensuring equal involvement, aligning with studies by Faragher et al. (2021) and Muega (2017).

Table 1. Implementation of Inclusive Education Principles

| Indicators                                                                                                                         | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Learner-centered</b>                                                                                                            |               |                           |
| 1. Used learner-centered methods to engage all students in the learning process.                                                   | 4.78          | Always Implemented        |
| 2. Respected and valued the individual differences and preferences of my students.                                                 | 4.92          | Always Implemented        |
| 3. Encouraged my students to participate actively and collaboratively in classroom activities.                                     | 5.00          | Always Implemented        |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>4.90</b>   | <b>Always Implemented</b> |
| <b>Developmentally Appropriate</b>                                                                                                 |               |                           |
| 4. Designed and delivered instruction that is suitable for the developmental stages and abilities of my students.                  | 4.74          | Always Implemented        |
| 5. Provided appropriate scaffolding and support for my students to achieve the learning objectives.                                | 4.82          | Always Implemented        |
| 6. Assessed and monitored the progress and outcomes of my students using multiple and flexible methods.                            | 4.80          | Always Implemented        |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>4.79</b>   | <b>Always Implemented</b> |
| <b>Culture-sensitive</b>                                                                                                           |               |                           |
| 7. Recognized and appreciated the cultural diversity and background of my students.                                                | 4.78          | Always Implemented        |
| 8. Incorporated the cultural knowledge and experiences of my students into the curriculum and instruction.                         | 4.78          | Always Implemented        |
| 9. Fostered a positive and inclusive classroom climate that respects and celebrates the cultural diversity of my students.         | 4.74          | Always Implemented        |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>4.77</b>   | <b>Always Implemented</b> |
| <b>Relevance</b>                                                                                                                   |               |                           |
| 10. Ensured that the curriculum and instruction are relevant and meaningful to the needs and interests of my students.             | 4.92          | Always Implemented        |
| 11. Connected the curriculum and instruction to the real-life situations and contexts of my students.                              | 4.98          | Always Implemented        |
| 12. Enhanced the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of my students through the curriculum and instruction.               | 4.96          | Always Implemented        |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>4.95</b>   | <b>Always Implemented</b> |
| <b>Gender-responsive</b>                                                                                                           |               |                           |
| 13. Promoted gender equality and equity in the curriculum and instruction.                                                         | 4.80          | Always Implemented        |
| 14. Addressed the gender issues and stereotypes that may affect the learning and development of my students.                       | 4.72          | Always Implemented        |
| 15. Encouraged the participation and contribution of both male and female students in classroom activities.                        | 4.94          | Always Implemented        |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>4.82</b>   | <b>Always Implemented</b> |
| <b>Curriculum Contextualization</b>                                                                                                |               |                           |
| 16. Adapted the curriculum and the learning activities to the local context and the community of my students.                      | 4.82          | Always Implemented        |
| 17. Adapted the curriculum to meet the diverse needs and interests of my students.                                                 | 4.80          | Always Implemented        |
| 18. Collaborated with other teachers and specialists to plan and implement the adapted curriculum and instruction for my students. | 4.64          | Always Implemented        |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>4.75</b>   | <b>Always Implemented</b> |

**Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:**

|              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| 4.20 to 5.00 | Always Implemented     |
| 3.40 to 4.19 | Often Implemented      |
| 2.60 to 3.39 | Moderately Implemented |

|              |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1.80 to 2.59 | Partially Implemented |
| 1.00 to 1.79 | Not Implemented       |

For developmentally appropriate practices, providing scaffolding and support scored highest at 4.82, while designing suitable instruction was lowest at 4.74, still indicating consistent implementation. The overall weighted mean of 4.79 suggests a commitment to developmentally appropriate practices. This aligns with the Philippines' Enhanced Basic Education Act (2013) and DepEd's Inclusive Education Policy Framework, emphasizing responsive and developmentally suitable curricula.

Regarding cultural sensitivity, recognizing diversity, and integrating cultural knowledge into the curriculum both scored 4.78 while fostering an inclusive classroom climate was 4.74. The overall 4.77 weighted mean reflects consistent culturally sensitive practices, crucial for inclusive learning environments. However, the lower mean for fostering a positive classroom climate indicates room for improvement, supported by Macabenta et al. (2023) and Cole (2019) on promoting inclusivity through training.

The relevance domain achieved a high 4.95 weighted mean, with 4.98 for connecting curriculum to real-life contexts and 4.92 for ensuring relevance and meaningfulness. Teachers effectively linked content to students' lived experiences, though understanding student needs could be improved, aligning with studies by Espinosa et al. (2023), Verzosa and Vistro-Yu (2019), and Del Valle (2020) on relevant and learner-centered education.

Gender responsiveness saw a 4.94 weighted mean for encouraging equal participation, while addressing gender issues scored lower at 4.72, though still consistent. The 4.92 overall weighted mean suggests robust adherence to gender-responsive practices, but room for improvement in tackling gender biases, supported by studies from Jorvina et al. (2023) and DepEd's Gender Equality Movement (GEMS-CL).

Lastly, curriculum contextualization had a 4.82 weighted mean for adapting curriculum to local contexts, and 4.64 for collaborative planning, though still consistent. The 4.75 overall weighted mean reflects a solid commitment to contextualization, supported by Llego (2022) and DepEd's guidelines on making competencies relevant through localization (DepEd, 2016).

### 3.2. Teachers' Competence in Promoting Inclusive Education

To assess teachers' competence in promoting inclusive education, a Likert-type scale measured proficiency across relevant trainings, academic qualifications, and resource availability. Data were compared across three schools to identify disparities or strengths. For relevant trainings, differentiated instruction scored highest at 4.68 ('Very High'), while attending SSES trainings was lowest at 3.24 ('Moderate'), with an overall 3.80 ('High') weighted mean. This suggests adaptability in teaching diverse learners but gaps in specialized SSES training, aligning with studies by Llanos et al. (2024) and Alcosero et al. (2023) on enhancing teacher preparedness through comprehensive training.

Table 2. Teachers' Competence in Promoting Inclusive Education

| Indicators                |                                                                                                                                                                                          | Weighted Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Relevant Trainings</b> |                                                                                                                                                                                          |               |                       |
| 1.                        | Attended relevant trainings on Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) education.                                                                                                      | 3.24          | Moderate              |
| 2.                        | Differentiated Instruction is a teaching approach that adapts the content, process, and product of learning according to the diverse needs, interests, and readiness levels of learners. | 4.68          | Very High             |
| 3.                        | Acquired the skills and techniques of Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) education from the trainings.                                                                            | 3.44          | High                  |
| 4.                        | Met the academic requirements and standards for teaching in an inclusive setting.                                                                                                        | 3.90          | High                  |
| 5.                        | Benefited from the feedback and evaluation of my practice from the trainings.                                                                                                            | 3.76          | High                  |
| <b>Overall</b>            |                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>3.80</b>   | <b>High</b>           |

| <b>Academic Requirements</b>                                                                                                                                                             |             |             |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 6. Met the academic requirements for teaching in a Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) setting.                                                                                    | 3.84        | High        |
| 7. Completed the courses and modules on Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) education in my pre-service or in-service education.                                                   | 3.20        | Moderate    |
| 8. Obtained the qualifications and certifications for teaching in a Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) setting.                                                                   | 3.44        | High        |
| 9. Updated my knowledge and skills in Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) education through continuous professional development.                                                   | 3.64        | High        |
| 10. Participated in research and innovation activities on Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES) education.                                                                           | 3.08        | Moderate    |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>3.44</b> | <b>High</b> |
| <b>Resources</b>                                                                                                                                                                         |             |             |
| 11. Adequate resources to support the learning of all students.                                                                                                                          | 3.62        | High        |
| 12. Accessed to the physical and material resources, such as the classroom environment, equipment, and materials, which facilitate Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES).            | 3.56        | High        |
| 13. Accessed to human and social resources, such as school leaders, colleagues, specialists, parents, and community members, which facilitate Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES). | 3.94        | High        |
| 14. Accessed to financial and budgetary resources, such as funding, grants, and subsidies, which facilitate Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES).                                   | 2.66        | Moderate    |
| 15. Accessed to information and technological resources, such as the internet, software, and assistive devices, which facilitate Special Science Elementary Schools (SSES).              | 3.34        | Moderate    |
| <b>Overall</b>                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>3.42</b> | <b>High</b> |
| <b>Legend of the Verbal Interpretation of the Weighted Mean:</b>                                                                                                                         |             |             |
| 4.20 to 5.00                                                                                                                                                                             | Very High   |             |
| 3.40 to 4.19                                                                                                                                                                             | High        |             |
| 2.60 to 3.39                                                                                                                                                                             | Moderate    |             |
| 1.80 to 2.59                                                                                                                                                                             | Low         |             |
| 1.00 to 1.79                                                                                                                                                                             | Very Low    |             |

Regarding academic requirements, meeting SSES qualifications scored highest at 3.84 ('High'), while research involvement was lowest at 3.08 ('Moderate'), with a 3.44 overall weighted mean. Teachers met academic qualifications but lacked robust research engagement, indicating room for improvement by encouraging research participation, supported by Tantengco (2015), Orbeta and Paqueo (2022), and Vela (2015) on the need for innovation.

For resource availability, access to human/social resources like colleagues and community scored highest at 3.94 ('High'), while financial resources were lowest at 2.66 ('Moderate'), culminating in a 3.42 overall weighted mean. While human resources were adequate, financial constraints posed challenges, necessitating interventions for balanced resource allocation, as highlighted by Prado (2023), Cayabyab (2023), and DepEd's Inclusive Education Policy Framework emphasizing resource access for SSES success.

### 3.3. Relationship Between Teachers' Competence and Implementation of Inclusive Education Principles

The Pearson correlation analysis in Table 3 unveiled varying strengths of relationships between teacher competence and inclusive education implementation. A near-perfect 0.978 correlation emerged between training competence and learner-centered practices, underscoring comprehensive training's criticality in student-focused learning. Academic background strongly correlated (0.966) with culture-sensitive approaches, suggesting academics shape cultural integration in pedagogy. Conversely, academic competence showed a modest 0.321 correlation with teaching relevance, indicating credentials don't guarantee contextual relevance. Resources moderately correlated (0.423) with curriculum contextualization, hinting at other influential factors beyond resources for localization. These findings affirm a significant yet nuanced relationship between competence and inclusive practice, highlighting areas for targeted interventions like training, resources, and policy reforms to bridge identified gaps.

Table 3. Relationship between Teachers' Competence and Implementation of Inclusive Education Principles

|                         | Correlation                  | Level of Competence |          |           |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------|-----------|
|                         |                              | Training            | Academic | Resources |
| Level of Implementation | Learner-centered             | .978**              | .799**   | .755**    |
|                         | Developmentally appropriate  | .949**              | .818**   | .675**    |
|                         | Culture-sensitive            | .751**              | .966**   | .657**    |
|                         | Relevance                    | .533**              | .321*    | .497**    |
|                         | Gender-responsive            | .720**              | .713**   | .961**    |
|                         | Curriculum-contextualization | .535**              | .454**   | .423**    |

Legend: Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Related studies underscore the importance of comprehensive training and support. Macabenta et al. (2023) and Llego (n.d.) emphasized ongoing professional education and instructional aids for inclusive practices. Rubio and Saenz (2023) found a link between academic performance and teacher competence standards in Camarines Norte. Botor and Osea (2014) indicated training is crucial for enhancing early childhood teacher competencies in Bicol, aligning with the study's weak correlation between general competence and inclusive implementation, necessitating targeted professional development.

### 3.4. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Promoting Inclusive Learning Education

The frequency analysis in Table 4 unveiled resource limitations as the most prevalent challenge, with lack of materials, equipment, facilities, and funding ranking highest ( $f=43$ ). This aligns with findings on underfunding's impact on inclusive education programs in the Philippines (Orbeta and Paqueo, 2022). Less frequent issues like lack of parental support and shared accountability (rank 25.5) were identified, echoing Aduda's (2013) emphasis on collaboration among stakeholders. While less common, these challenges merit attention, alongside exploring "other challenges" ( $f=4$ ) for additional areas requiring support.

Table 4. Challenges in Promoting Inclusive Learning Education

| Indicators                                                                            | f  | Rank |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|
| Lack of resources, such as materials, equipment, facilities, or funding               | 43 | 1    |
| Lack of training, such as workshops, seminars, or courses                             | 37 | 2    |
| Lack of assessment and evaluation tools for inclusive education outcomes              | 20 | 3    |
| Lack of support from the special education teachers                                   | 13 | 4.5  |
| Lack of curriculum adaptation and differentiation for diverse learners                | 13 | 4.5  |
| Lack of time, such as planning, preparation, or evaluation                            | 11 | 7.5  |
| Lack of policy and guidelines for inclusive education in the Department of Education  | 11 | 7.5  |
| Lack of inclusive pedagogy and instructional strategies for inclusive classrooms      | 11 | 7.5  |
| Lack of innovation and creativity for inclusive education                             | 11 | 7.5  |
| Lack of coordination and integration of services and programs for inclusive education | 9  | 11   |
| Lack of recognition and reward for inclusive education practices                      | 9  | 11   |
| Lack of accessibility and affordability for inclusive education                       | 9  | 11   |
| Lack of flexibility, such as curriculum, assessment, or instruction                   | 8  | 13.5 |
| Lack of advocacy and communication for inclusive education                            | 8  | 13.5 |
| Lack of leadership and management skills for inclusive education                      | 7  | 15   |
| Lack of monitoring and feedback mechanisms for inclusive education                    | 6  | 16   |
| Lack of community awareness and participation in inclusive education                  | 5  | 17.5 |
| Lack of equity and quality for inclusive education                                    | 5  | 17.5 |
| Lack of awareness, such as knowledge, skills, or attitudes                            | 4  | 19.5 |
| Other challenges                                                                      | 4  | 19.5 |
| Lack of support from the school administration                                        | 3  | 21.5 |
| Lack of sustainability and scalability for inclusive education                        | 3  | 21.5 |
| Lack of parental involvement and engagement in inclusive education                    | 2  | 24   |
| Lack of self-efficacy and confidence among teachers and students                      | 2  | 24   |
| Lack of respect and acceptance for diversity and inclusion                            | 2  | 24   |

|                                                                   |   |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---|------|
| Lack of support from the parents or guardians                     | 1 | 25.5 |
| Lack of accountability and responsibility for inclusive education | 1 | 25.5 |

To address the multifaceted obstacles, a multi-pronged approach is recommended: increased funding and resource allocation for inclusive education (Orbeta and Paqueo, 2022); fostering collaboration among teachers, administration, parents, and community (Aduda, 2013); strengthening systemic frameworks through policy reviews, leadership development, and coordinated services (CHED, 2022); and targeted professional development on inclusive pedagogy, assessment strategies, self-efficacy, and diversity respect. Implementing these strategies can create a truly inclusive environment. Regionally, studies in Bicol and Camarines Norte highlight challenges like differentiated instruction in multi-grade classrooms, remote area difficulties, and the need for comprehensive training and resources (Cruz and Madarang, 2023), aligning with the resource constraints identified. CHED's strategic plan prioritizes budget allocation and harmonized mandates to promote inclusive access to quality education, addressing systemic and leadership challenges (CHED, 2022).

### 3.5. Proposed Strategies for Improvement

Table 5 outlines strategies proposed by participants to bolster inclusive education implementation. The provision of comprehensive teacher training opportunities emerged as the top recommendation ( $f=30$ ), acknowledging educators' pivotal role and the need for continuous skill development via regular workshops. This aligns with DepEd Philippines' In-Service Training (INSET) program (DepEd Order No. 22, s. 2023) aimed at enhancing teacher competencies in inclusive education. Fostering collaboration among stakeholders like teachers, administrators, parents, and the community ( $f=25$ ) resonates with DepEd's advocacy for school-level Inclusive Education Committees (Llego, 2022). Accessible infrastructure and essential resources ( $f=22$ ) are supported by initiatives from Camarines Norte's PDAO and PSWDO providing educational assistance to children with disabilities (CamNorteNews, n.d.). Other suggestions included curriculum modifications, support services, awareness campaigns, and continuous communication, underscoring inclusive education's multifaceted nature.

Table 5. Strategies for Enhancing the Implementation of Inclusive Learning Education

| Indicators                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | f  | Rank |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|
| Providing comprehensive training is crucial for successful inclusive education implementation, prioritizing regular training workshops for teachers to maintain updated knowledge on inclusive education practices.                                     | 30 | 1    |
| Innovate and adapt inclusive education practices to promote quality education in our school, utilizing curricular adaptations and modifications for inclusive education.                                                                                | 28 | 2    |
| Encourage collaboration between special education and general education teachers to promote shared responsibility for student success, alongside providing comprehensive training on inclusive teaching practices and strategies.                       | 25 | 3    |
| Ensure that school infrastructure is accessible to students with disabilities and supply necessary resources for inclusive education.                                                                                                                   | 24 | 4.5  |
| Professional development empowers educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively support students in inclusive classrooms, fostering a welcoming environment based on acceptance and understanding.                                   | 24 | 4.5  |
| We should schedule parental counseling meetings and organize recollection activities for intermediate students while fostering collaboration and partnerships between schools, parents, and community organizations to create a supportive environment. | 23 | 6    |
| Adequate resources are essential for schools to ensure that students with special needs receive the necessary support for full participation in inclusive education.                                                                                    | 21 | 7    |
| Maintain constant communication and proper information relay to subordinates, disseminating detailed guidelines, and conducting regular training and seminars to support inclusive practices.                                                           | 20 | 8    |
| Establish support services within the school to provide additional assistance to students with special needs, considering deploying qualified Special Education Teachers as needed.                                                                     | 18 | 10.5 |
| Conduct awareness campaigns and symposium programs to promote understanding and acceptance of diversity among students, implementing peer support programs to aid inclusion.                                                                            | 18 | 10.5 |
| Establish SPED centers for each central school to increase access to special education, alongside addressing family factors and promoting values, peace, health, unity, and love of family within the community.                                        | 18 | 10.5 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |    |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|------|
| Implement learner-centered teaching methods, combined with tailored assessments and individualized Education Plans (IEPs), to engage students with diverse learning styles effectively.                                                         | 18 | 10.5 |
| Conduct regular assessment and monitoring of inclusive practices, applying suitable, adaptable research to ensure the efficiency of inclusive education.                                                                                        | 17 | 14.5 |
| Seek support from school administration and parents, providing resources such as materials, equipment, facilities, and funding to support inclusive education.                                                                                  | 17 | 14.5 |
| Teachers play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education, adapting their instruction to accommodate diverse needs, and receiving comprehensive training to support student success.                                                     | 17 | 14.5 |
| Schools, teachers, and learners must collaborate to eliminate discriminatory attitudes and provide access to quality education for all children, with appropriate learning materials enhancing student understanding and facilitating learning. | 17 | 14.5 |
| Student retention improves with active parental support for their child's learning at home, while parents and the community also contribute to promoting inclusive education and ensuring quality education for all.                            | 16 | 17   |
| Achieve greater inclusion through tailored support systems, professional development for educators, a culture of acceptance and understanding, and advocacy for inclusive policies throughout the educational system.                           | 15 | 18.5 |
| Teachers should recognize students' diverse cultures and backgrounds, encouraging them to learn from each other's experiences, while creating a safe learning environment and utilizing diverse teaching materials.                             | 15 | 18.5 |
| Modify the curriculum to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities, while establishing a clear curriculum with deadlines for seamless transition and implementation of inclusive practices.                                             | 14 | 20   |
| Other Answers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 3  | 21   |

The findings indicate a multi-pronged approach is necessary, encompassing comprehensive teacher training, fostered collaboration, accessible infrastructure, and resource provision. This comprehensive strategy aligns with studies emphasizing teacher training (Florian and Rouse, 2009), stakeholder collaboration (Sharma et al., 2012), and accessible infrastructure and resources (Ainscow et al., 2006) as crucial for effective inclusive education implementation. Further exploration into "other answers" ( $f=3$ ) may reveal additional suggestions. Addressing these multifaceted aspects through a holistic approach can enhance inclusive learning principles' implementation.

### 3.6. Proposed Interventions for Enhancement

Based on the key findings of the study, the researcher developed an innovation proposal called "PROJECT We Rise" with the aim of establishing the "Alliance for Inclusive Education" (AIE). This organization seeks to advocate for, enhance, and support inclusive education in elementary schools by implementing the Special Science Elementary School (SSES) program in the Division of Camarines Norte. The rationale for the project is rooted in several legal frameworks, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the Philippine Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (K-12 Law). These laws emphasize the state's responsibility to ensure inclusive education and mandate its implementation at all levels.

The objectives of PROJECT We Rise are three-fold: raising awareness about the importance of inclusive education among all stakeholders, improving educational practices to better accommodate diverse learning needs, and providing support to stakeholders involved in inclusive education. The proposal outlines the structure and activities of the AIE, including policy advocacy, professional development for teachers, parent engagement, community outreach, and fundraising. It also includes a budget for necessary materials and potential funding sources such as school funds, solicitations, and donations. The expected outputs include a comprehensive policy framework, professional development programs for teachers, and increased community awareness. The proposal emphasizes the importance of monitoring and evaluation through surveys, feedback forms, performance metrics, and potentially an external evaluator to assess the program's effectiveness.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research examines the relationship between teachers' competencies and the effective implementation of Inclusive Education principles. It investigates the methodologies used by educators in the

Department of Education, focusing on learner-centered approaches, developmental appropriateness, cultural sensitivity, relevance, gender responsiveness, and curriculum contextualization. The study evaluates teachers' proficiency in promoting Inclusive Education through relevant training, academic qualifications, and available resources, and explores potential correlations between teacher competence and the application of Inclusive Education principles. Additionally, it identifies the challenges educators face in advancing Inclusive Learning Education and offers strategic recommendations and interventions to enhance the implementation of these principles.

Employing Transformational Leadership Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory, this quantitative study uses a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationship between teachers' competence and the implementation of Inclusive Education principles. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire administered to Grades 1-6 Special Education (SpEd) teachers in the Division of Camarines Norte, Philippines, including teachers from Daet Elementary School, Labo Elementary School, and Vinzons Pilot Elementary School. The study found a high level of implementation of Inclusive Education principles among teachers, with strong correlations between comprehensive training and learner-centered approaches, as well as between academic background and culture-sensitive practices. However, it also identified resource constraints as a significant challenge. Recommendations include comprehensive teacher training, increased research engagement, strategic resource allocation, and the establishment of the "Alliance for Inclusive Education" (AIE) through the "PROJECT We Rise" initiative, which aims to support inclusive education in Special Science Elementary Schools through policy advocacy, professional development, and community engagement.

Based on the study's findings, several key recommendations are proposed: Educational institutions and policymakers should prioritize comprehensive professional development programs for teachers, emphasizing pedagogical skills, learner-centered approaches, developmental appropriateness, inclusive classroom environments, cultural diversity, and gender issues. Continuous training and support are essential for refining inclusive education principles. Initiatives should also encourage teachers' engagement in research and innovation related to inclusive education, fostering collaborations with academic institutions and establishing research committees. Addressing resource constraints through increased budget allocations, alternative funding sources, and optimized resource management is crucial for creating an inclusive learning environment. A collaborative approach involving teachers, administrators, parents, community organizations, and government agencies should be adopted, potentially through the establishment of Inclusive Education Committees to facilitate shared accountability and effective implementation. Policies and frameworks should be reviewed and revised to align with inclusive education principles, ensuring curricula are learner-centered, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, relevant, gender-sensitive, and contextualized. Future research should include longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of inclusive education initiatives and qualitative methods to gain deeper insights from stakeholders, as well as comparative studies across different regions or educational settings.

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