

**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN MANDAUE CITY DIVISION:  
A PROPOSED TEACHER PROGRAM**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study aimed to produce evidence-based insights to support the design of a proposed teacher development program focused on strengthening educators' competencies and advancing effective inclusive education. A phenomenological research approach was employed to explore the participants lived personal and professional experiences, with emphasis on their perceptions, challenges, coping mechanisms, and teaching practices. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires, allowing participants to provide rich and detailed narratives of their experiences. Inclusive education is a transformative experience for teachers, reshaping their professional identity, pedagogy, and overall well-being. SPED teachers develop patience, flexibility, creativity, and resilience, while deriving personal fulfillment from students' progress. Intentional and compassionate teaching within inclusive classrooms fosters professional growth, strengthens beliefs in equity, and reinforces the potential of every child to learn. It is recommended that SPED teachers engage in continuous professional development on inclusive strategies, leadership, and mental health resilience. They should advocate for manageable workloads, access to teaching assistants, and participate in peer mentoring and collaborative planning to share best practices and strengthen the supportive teaching community.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education emphasized teaching children to understand differences, support others, and actively participate in creating equitable learning environments. Classrooms played a central role in addressing the diverse needs, interests, and abilities of all learners, fostering a culture of respect and inclusion (De Guzman, 2020). In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 11650 ensured that students with disabilities were provided with opportunities to learn alongside their peers, with appropriate support and accommodations. This legislation, endorsed by former President Rodrigo Duterte, guaranteed that no student would be denied admission due to disability, highlighting the government's commitment to inclusive education.

Special Education (SPED) teachers were at the forefront of this initiative, serving as advocates, facilitators, and collaborators in creating inclusive classrooms. Their work involved providing individualized support, coordinating with colleagues, and ensuring that the rights of students with disabilities were upheld. Despite their expertise, SPED teachers faced significant challenges, such as managing diverse learning needs, collaborating effectively with general education teachers, and coping with emotional and professional demands (De Guzman, 2020). These challenges underscored the importance of understanding their lived experiences to improve inclusive education practices.

This study focused on the Mandaue City Division, where SPED teachers navigated institutional and systemic factors that affected the delivery of inclusive education. Legislative efforts, such as Senate Bill No. 1414, aimed to establish Inclusive Education Learning Resource Centers in all public schools, providing standards, guidelines, and comprehensive training for educators. However, implementing inclusive education effectively required not only policies but also skilled and supported teachers who could adapt strategies, interventions, and accommodations to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of SPED teachers in implementing inclusive education, examining their perceptions, challenges, coping strategies, and professional practices. By identifying the barriers and facilitators in inclusive classrooms, the study aimed to provide insights that could inform a proposed teacher program to strengthen the capacity of educators and enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education in Mandaue City (De Guzman, 2020). Ultimately, understanding these experiences helped bridge the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that all learners received equitable and meaningful educational opportunities.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to thematically transcribe the descriptive phenomenon on the lived experiences of the special education teachers on their implementations of inclusive education for the learners located in Mandaue City Division. The answers to the following queries were the basis for the proposed training program. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' experiences and perceptions of their role in implementing inclusive education?
2. What challenges and barriers do teachers encounter when working with students with special needs in inclusive classrooms?
3. How do SPED teachers navigate and adapt to challenges to ensure inclusive and effective instruction?
4. What teaching strategies, interventions, and accommodations are used to support students with special needs in an inclusive setting?
5. What institutional and systemic factors influence SPED teachers' lived experiences, including social attitudes, cultural perspectives, and community engagement, and how do these impact the effectiveness of inclusive education?

6. What recommendations and insights do SPED teachers provide for improving the implementation of inclusive education?
7. What teacher programs are proposed to enhance inclusive education?

## Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences of Special Education (SPED) teachers in implementing inclusive education in Mandaue City Division. A phenomenological approach was utilized to capture the personal and professional realities of the participants, focusing on their perceptions, challenges, coping strategies, and teaching practices. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires, enabling participants to share detailed accounts of their experiences. Colaizzi's Descriptive Phenomenological Method (1978) guided the analysis, ensuring the identification of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of themes, and development of a comprehensive description of the phenomenon.

The study involved 12 SPED teachers from Mandaue City Division. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants based on relevant characteristics, such as grade level taught, type of learners, and experience with inclusive classrooms (Andrade, 2020). This approach ensured that participants possessed the necessary expertise and experience to provide meaningful insights into inclusive education practices.

The primary research instruments were self-made questionnaires and in-depth interview guides. The questionnaire included both structured and open-ended questions to capture participants' perceptions and experiences. The instrument underwent content validation, using a five-point scale to evaluate clarity, comprehensiveness, and objectivity. Interviews provided additional insights into strategies, adaptations, and interventions used by SPED teachers to support students with diverse needs. Participants were given sufficient time to respond, and all interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher ensured confidentiality and handled all data securely, using password-protected files. Completed questionnaires were disposed of after encoding, tabulating, and analyzing the data. No incentives were provided to participants.

Colaizzi's seven-step method was used for qualitative analysis: (1) familiarization, (2) identifying significant statements, (3) formulating meanings, (4) organizing theme clusters, (5) developing exhaustive descriptions, (6) producing the fundamental structure, and (7) validating findings through member checking. This method allowed for the extraction of themes and patterns to accurately represent SPED teachers lived experiences and inform the proposed teacher program.

The study adhered to ethical guidelines of the APA (2020). Informed consent was obtained, ensuring participants understood the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms and secure storage of data. Emotional and psychological well-being was monitored, and no coercion or incentives were used. The study respected participants' cultural and professional backgrounds throughout data collection and analysis.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: SPED Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions on their Role for Implementing the Inclusive Education**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Verbal Statements</i>	<i>Initial Codes</i>	<i>Theme</i>
	1	Teaching in public schools allows the teachers to		

<p><i>How do you describe your experience and perceptions of your role in the implementation of inclusive education?</i></p>		<p>serve more students who need support.</p>	<p>Motivations and Personal Drive for Inclusive Education</p>	<p>Special education teachers show strong dedication to inclusive education, guided by empathy and a commitment to support all learners. They understand inclusion as meaningful participation, not just physical presence, and use varied teaching strategies to meet diverse needs. However, they face challenges like limited resources, lack of training, and institutional barriers that affect effective implementation.</p>
	2	<p><i>Inclusive education means giving all learners—regardless of ability—a chance to grow and succeed in the same classroom.</i></p>	<p>Conceptual Understanding of Inclusion</p>	
	3	<p><i>Specializing in inclusive education and individualized instruction.</i></p>	<p>Instructional Practices in Inclusive Settings</p>	
	4	<p><i>I am passionate about helping children with special needs reach their full potential.</i></p>	<p>Systemic and Professional Challenges</p>	
	5	<p><i>Seeing their progress motivates the learners in everyday lesson deliveries.</i></p>		
	6	<p><i>Inclusive education means providing equal learning opportunities for all students by adapting teaching methods to meet learners' diverse needs.</i></p>		
	7	<p><i>I promote equity and support learners with special needs in under-resourced public schools.</i></p>		
	8	<p><i>I was inspired by a family member with special needs, which increased my desire to support underserved learners.</i></p>		
	9	<p><i>There are some instances of the encountering problems such as</i></p>		

		<i>the financial and career stability of the special education teachers.</i>		
	10	<i>Inclusive education means giving all learners equal opportunities.</i>		
	11	<i>Inclusive education is about ensuring all learners are valued and given appropriate support in a shared learning space.</i>		
	12	<i>I usually analyzed the meaning to reserve on the foci for the students with intellectual disabilities at the intermediate level.</i>		

The results revealed that SPED teachers were deeply motivated to implement inclusive education, driven by personal experiences, passion for helping students with special needs, and a desire to serve underserved communities. Participants consistently described inclusion as providing equal opportunities for all learners, adapting teaching strategies to meet diverse needs, and fostering a supportive and respectful learning environment. Teachers highlighted their use of individualized instruction and monitoring student progress as key practices to ensure that learners with varying abilities could thrive in the classroom.

At the same time, teachers acknowledged several challenges that affected their ability to implement inclusive education effectively. These included limited resources, financial constraints, and institutional barriers that made it difficult to provide consistent support. Despite these obstacles, the participants remained committed to their roles, finding motivation in student progress and the positive impact of their teaching. Their responses reflected a balance between dedication to inclusive practices and the ongoing need for practical support to address systemic and professional challenges.

**Table 2: Challenges and Barriers Encountered When Working For the Students with Diverse Needs in Inclusive Classrooms**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Verbal Statements</i>	<i>Initial Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
		<i>One of the major challenges is the lack of teaching</i>	<i>Resource Limitations</i>	<i>It highlights significant</i>

<p><i>What challenges and barriers do you encounter when working with students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms?</i></p>	1	<p><i>materials and assistive devices for students with special needs.</i></p>	<p><i>Classroom Environment Constraints</i></p> <p><i>Teacher Adaptability and Coping Strategies</i></p> <p><i>Awareness and Training Gaps</i></p> <p><i>Planning and Support Systems</i></p>	<p><i>systemic challenges—such as resource shortages, overcrowded and inaccessible classrooms, fragmented support systems, and gaps in professional training—that constrain inclusive education, yet their resilience and adaptive strategies underscore both their commitment and the urgent need for policy reforms, capacity-building, and stronger institutional support to achieve effective inclusion.</i></p>
	2	<p><i>The overcrowded classrooms and limited space make it hard to give individual attention.</i></p>		
	3	<p><i>There are some educators in the special need classes create learning centers and rotate students for differentiated supervisions.</i></p>		
	4	<p><i>The biggest barrier is the lack of awareness among staff and parents about inclusive education.</i></p>		
	5	<p><i>Managing by setting classroom routines and using visual aids and simple instructions to maintain structure.</i></p>		
	6	<p><i>This would also regain the existence on the events for the special education teachers on the supportive class community.</i></p>		
	7	<p><i>The inadequacy of teaching and adaptive materials will give existing yielded alleviated repercussion by means of lack of assistive devices and accessible facilities.</i></p>		
		<p><i>There are limited availabilities of</i></p>		

	8	<i>well - trained teachers or aides to overcome some of the foreshadowed overcrowding classrooms.</i>		
	9	<i>Provisions to resolve difficulties for individual support and the ailment in the time for planning and preparation.</i>		
	10	<i>Addressing and dealing the coping strategies for the large class sizes and time constraints</i>		
	11	<i>Inadequacies on the surface - level teacher training.</i>		
	12	<i>Eliciting the Solutions for the Lack of Resources and Support Staff</i>		

The responses revealed that SPED teachers encountered multiple challenges and barriers while working with students with diverse needs in inclusive classrooms. The most frequently reported difficulties were the lack of teaching materials, assistive devices, and trained support staff, which limited their capacity to deliver individualized instruction. Overcrowded classrooms and limited physical space further constrained their ability to provide focused attention to each learner. Despite these limitations, teachers demonstrated resourcefulness by creating learning centers, rotating students, implementing structured routines, and using visual aids to manage classroom dynamics effectively.

Participants also highlighted gaps in awareness and training among staff and parents as significant barriers to inclusive education. Teachers emphasized the need for structured planning, coordinated support systems, and institutional backing to address student needs comprehensively. These findings suggest that while educators consistently adapted and employed coping strategies to ensure student participation, sustainable and effective inclusion requires systemic improvements, including adequate resources, professional development, and collaborative support within the school environment.

**Table 3: SPED Teachers’ Navigations and Adaptions to The Challenges for Inclusive and Effective Instruction**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Verbal Statements</i>	<i>Initial Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	1	<i>Teaching in an inclusive setting has made the</i>	<i>Professional Growth and</i>	<i>Reflect a transformative</i>

<p><i>How do you navigate and adapt to the challenges while ensuring inclusive and effective instruction?</i></p>		<p><i>teachers more patient, flexible, and compassionate.</i></p>	<p><i>Development</i></p>	<p><i>journey characterized by professional growth, fulfillment through student progress, a deep commitment to equity and learner-centered approaches, the development of coping mechanisms and emotional resilience, and a collaborative shift toward differentiated instruction that collectively shapes teacher identity, pedagogy, and overall well-being.</i></p>
	2	<p><i>Commitment to learner-centered teaching and highlighted the importance of equity in education.</i></p>	<p><i>Fulfillment and Motivation Through Student Progress</i></p>	
	3	<p><i>Teachers are as in being more fulfilled and to create meaningful enrichments in inclusive education.</i></p>	<p><i>Commitment to Equity and Learner-Centered Approaches</i></p>	
	4	<p><i>Inclusion challenges the teachers to grow professionally.</i></p>	<p><i>Coping Mechanisms and Emotional Resilience</i></p>	
	5	<p><i>Inclusive education has helped the teachers to appreciate diversity in the classroom.</i></p>	<p><i>Toward Collaborative and Differentiated Teaching</i></p>	
	6	<p><i>It deepened their beliefs that every child can learn.</i></p>		
	7	<p><i>Inclusion can be exhausting, but it gives me a strong sense of purpose and fulfillment.</i></p>		
	8	<p><i>Despite challenges, coping mechanisms are existing by means of academic, behavioral, or social systematized strategy and planning.</i></p>		
	9	<p><i>Most of the teachers' philosophy shifted toward collaborative and differentiated teaching.</i></p>		

	10	<i>Though the experienced stress and burnout, especially with limited support.</i>		
	11	<i>Teachers experienced stress and a more profound sense of meaning and joy in my teaching journey.</i>		
	12	<i>Inclusion is an intentional and creative teaching with pedagogical strategies.</i>		

The responses showed that SPED teachers navigated the challenges of inclusive education through significant professional growth and personal development. They reported becoming more patient, flexible, and compassionate while adopting creative and intentional teaching strategies to address diverse student needs. These experiences encouraged teachers to embrace a stronger commitment to equity and learner-centered approaches, ensuring that all students are provided meaningful opportunities to learn and succeed.

Teachers also expressed fulfillment and motivation through observing student progress. Even in the face of stress and burnout, witnessing learners’ achievements reinforced their sense of purpose and joy in teaching. Systematic coping strategies, including structured planning, academic and behavioral supports, and self-care, were implemented to manage classroom demands and maintain emotional resilience.

Additionally, participants described a shift toward collaborative and differentiated teaching. By engaging with colleagues and adapting instruction to meet individual student needs, teachers enhanced their instructional effectiveness and cultivated a philosophical transformation toward inclusive pedagogy. Overall, the findings suggest that navigating inclusive classrooms strengthened teachers’ professional skills, emotional resilience, and motivation, highlighting that inclusion is not only a policy requirement but also a transformative process shaping teacher identity and practice.

**Table 4: Teaching Strategies, Interventions, and Accommodations do SPED Teachers Use to Support Students with Special Needs in an Inclusive Setting with Collaborations Among General Education Teachers, Parents, and Administrators to Facilitate Inclusive Education**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Verbal Statements</i>	<i>Initial Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
	1	<i>Teachers would make sure they feel welcomed and part of every activity.</i>	<i>Differentiated Instruction and Multi-Sensory Learning</i>	<i>Inclusive education requires SPED</i>
		<i>They simplify the instructions by</i>		

<p><i>What teaching strategies, interventions, and accommodations do SPED teachers use to support students with special needs in an inclusive setting with collaborations among general education teachers, parents, and administrators to facilitate inclusive education?</i></p>	2	<p><i>using of visuals and allow extra time for tasks while repairing the supportive classmates through visual schedules, behavior charts, and peer tutoring.</i></p>	<p><i>Emotional and Social Inclusion</i></p> <p><i>Collaborative Practices</i></p> <p><i>Use of Assistive Tools and Structured Supports</i></p>	<p><i>teachers to be adaptive, emotionally supportive, collaborative, resourceful, and actively engaged with families to meet the diverse needs of learners with special needs effectively.</i></p>
	3	<p><i>Implementing inclusive education was initially challenging.</i></p>	<p><i>Family Engagement and Communication</i></p>	
	4	<p><i>They differentiate tasks based on learning levels and give hands-on activities for students who struggle with abstract concepts.</i></p>		
	5	<p><i>Frequent check-ins and manipulatives have been effective, especially for students with learning difficulties.</i></p>		
	6	<p><i>Inclusive education proclaims the value of patience and flexibility.</i></p>		
	7	<p><i>Each student learns differently, and that would be viable to retain the special education paradigm.</i></p>		
	8	<p><i>The provisions for the multiple means of representation such as the videos, pictures, real objects or realia.</i></p>		
	9	<p><i>Positive reinforcement</i></p>		

		<i>and regular parent communication have been helpful in supporting consistent progress.</i>		
	10	<i>Using learning stations and task boxes has been effective in giving students manageable and engaging tasks.</i>		
	11	<i>General education teachers share the student profiles, the modify lesson plans, and doing co-teaching when possible.</i>		
	12	<i>Communications with parents through meetings and progress reports shall kept them to be involved in their child's development.</i>		

The responses reveal that SPED teachers employ a range of adaptive teaching strategies, interventions, and accommodations to support students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. They utilize differentiated instruction and multi-sensory learning, adjusting tasks to students' learning levels, incorporating visuals, hands-on activities, manipulatives, and multiple means of representation to ensure engagement and comprehension.

Teachers also prioritize emotional and social inclusion, deliberately creating welcoming environments where students feel valued, supported, and included in all classroom activities. This fosters a sense of belonging and community among learners.

Collaboration emerges as a key strategy. SPED teachers work closely with general education teachers, administrators, and parents, sharing student profiles, modifying lesson plans, and engaging in co-teaching when possible. Such collaborative practices enhance consistency in instruction and strengthen the support network around each learner.

Additionally, teachers make use of structured supports and assistive tools, such as visual schedules, behavior charts, learning stations, and task boxes, to help students stay organized, focused, and engaged. These tools are particularly effective in managing diverse learning needs within the classroom.

Finally, family engagement and communication are integral to inclusive education. Teachers maintain regular contact with parents through meetings, progress reports, and

reinforcement strategies, ensuring continuity of support at home and strengthening student progress.

**Table 5: Institutional and Systemic Factors Influencing SPED Teachers' Lived Experiences in terms of Social Attitudes, Cultural Perspectives, and Community Engagement that Impact the Effectiveness of Inclusive Education**

Questions	Participant	Verbal Statements	Sub – Themes	Themes
What institutional and systemic factors influence your lived experiences in terms of social attitudes, cultural perspectives, and community engagement that impact the effectiveness of inclusive education?	1	<i>Obstinance or the obtainment on the sharing student goals and discussing how to implement accommodations in class activities.</i>	<i>Collaborative Culture and Stakeholder Engagement</i>  <i>Capacity Building and Professional Development</i>  <i>Inclusive Mindset and Values</i>  <i>Challenges and Adaptive Strategies</i>	<i>Reflects a transformative journey marked by collaborative partnerships, continuous professional growth, and the development of inclusive mindsets amidst systemic and communicative challenges.</i>
	2	<i>There is also the camaraderie of the culture of inviting parents to be part of the goal-setting process and maintain communication classroom observation feedback.</i>		
	3	<i>Always to be feasible the infallible conduct for the parent orientations at the start of the year to set expectations and discuss collaboration that will always yield to the planning task formations.</i>		
	4	<i>Promoting teamwork for lesson differentiation and student support.</i>		
	5	<i>Forming as well with the technical support and mindset-building.</i>		
	6	<i>This will also enhance the culture of the constant</i>		

		<i>feedbacking and communication from the parents.</i>		
	7	<i>There are teachers who initially struggled with communication and social interaction with their learners in special education class.</i>		
	8	<i>Through consistent support, visual aids, and peer mentoring, they gradually began participating in group activities and expressing their selves more confident than the latter.</i>		
	9	<i>Teaching in an inclusive setting has significantly deepened the professional growth and reshaped the teachers' teaching philosophy.</i>		
	10	<i>Inclusive education has shifted the mindset from teaching the lesson to teaching the learner.</i>		
	11	<i>Greater understanding of individual differences by means of emptying your cup mindset.</i>		
	12	<i>Teachers say that inclusion has helped them become better people—more open, accepting,</i>		

		<i>and emotionally intelligent.</i>		
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The findings reveal that SPED teachers' experiences in implementing inclusive education are strongly influenced by institutional and systemic factors that encompass social attitudes, cultural perspectives, and community engagement. One prominent aspect is the development of a collaborative culture and stakeholder engagement, where teachers, parents, and school leaders work together to set shared student goals, plan accommodations, and maintain open communication. Teachers highlighted the importance of parent involvement through goal-setting, orientations, classroom observation feedback, and collaborative planning with general education teachers and administrators. Such engagement strengthens inclusion and ensures consistent support for learners.

Another factor is capacity building and professional development. Teachers reported that working in inclusive settings fosters professional growth, deepens pedagogical understanding, and builds technical and adaptive skills. Support from colleagues and ongoing mindset-building initiatives help teachers refine their teaching strategies and adapt effectively to diverse student needs.

Finally, teachers face challenges that require adaptive strategies. Some initially struggled with communication and social interactions with students, but through peer mentoring, consistent support, and visual aids, they gradually became more confident in facilitating inclusive learning. These adaptive strategies highlight the resilience and flexibility required to navigate systemic and social barriers effectively.

Overall, the results suggest that the effectiveness of inclusive education is closely linked to institutional culture, ongoing professional development, collaborative practices, and the cultivation of inclusive values. Teachers lived experiences demonstrate that while systemic and social challenges exist, proactive engagement with parents, peers, and administrators, combined with adaptive strategies, fosters a supportive and responsive environment for all learners. These insights underscore the need for schools to nurture collaboration, provide consistent training, and reinforce an inclusive mindset at all levels of the education system.

**Table 6: Recommendations and Insights of SPED Teachers for Improving the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Participant</i>	<i>Verbal Statements</i>	<i>Initial Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
<i>What recommendations and insights do SPED teachers have for improving the implementation of inclusive education?</i>	1	<i>Promoting awareness and acceptance through school-wide activities and inclusive policies.</i>	<i>Advocacy and Awareness for Inclusion</i>  <i>Strengthening Support Systems and Resources</i>	<i>Inclusive education necessitates a comprehensive approach that combines advocacy and awareness, robust support systems, and collaborative professional development to foster an equitable and</i>
	2	<i>Policies should ensure regular mental health support and manageable caseloads for teachers.</i>	<i>Collaboration and Professional Growth</i>	
	3	<i>Every small success is a big</i>		

		<i>step for the learners.</i>		<i>sustainable learning environment for all learners.</i>
	4	<i>Encourage peer mentoring programs where experienced teachers can support new ones.</i>		
	5	<i>Provide access to teaching assistants and establish monitoring systems in schools.</i>		
	6	<i>Always advocate for the learners and unfathomable queries for collaborative efforts with others.</i>		
	7	<i>Ensure policies support continuous professional development and special education teachers' incentives.</i>		
	8	<i>Knowing that being a special education teacher means being a lifelong learner and advocate, embrace that role.</i>		
	9	<i>Strengthen community partnerships to support inclusive programs and services beyond the school.</i>		
	10	<i>Teachers recommend team teaching, inclusion task forces, and engaging families and the community to</i>		

		<i>build a unified support system.</i>		
	11	<i>Inclusion is a journey that requires heart, humility, and courage.</i>		
	12	<i>The school is promoting collaborative training to foster a school culture and attend other nearby conferences that will be vital to inclusive education implementations.</i>		

The findings in Table 6 reveal that SPED teachers perceive the improvement of inclusive education as a multidimensional process requiring advocacy, systemic support, and collaboration. A primary recommendation is advocacy and awareness for inclusion, emphasizing the need to foster acceptance and understanding of diversity among students, staff, and the broader school community. Teachers suggested school-wide activities, inclusive policies, and persistent advocacy to promote an inclusive culture, highlighting that inclusion is both a professional and personal journey requiring heart, humility, and courage.

Another critical aspect is strengthening support systems and resources. Teachers underscored the importance of structural and institutional support, including access to teaching assistants, mental health services, manageable workloads, monitoring systems, and incentives for SPED teachers. These supports are essential to sustain the quality of inclusive practices, reduce teacher burnout, and ensure that students' diverse needs are met effectively.

In essence, the teachers' recommendations reflect a vision where inclusive education is sustainable, equitable, and deeply embedded in school culture, with shared responsibility among all stakeholders, adequate resources, and ongoing professional and emotional support for educators.

**Table 7: Proposed Teacher Program**

Title: *Inclusive Teaching Excellence Program (ITEP): Empowering Teachers, Enabling Learners*

Background and Rationale	<p>Inclusive education continues to be a central priority for the Department of Education, with the objective of ensuring that all learners, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities, have equitable access to quality education. Nevertheless, based on the experiences reported by Special Education (SPED) teachers within the Mandaue City Division, several barriers hinder the comprehensive implementation of inclusive education. These obstacles comprise insufficient training for educators, resource deficiencies, limited cooperation between SPED and general education instructors, and emotional and psychological stress arising from substantial workloads.</p> <p>To fill these gaps, a comprehensive teacher program is essential. It should enhance instructional skills, support teachers' well-being, promote collaboration, and strengthen school-community partnerships. The Inclusive Teaching Excellence Program (ITEP) has been developed to address these</p>
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	needs, ensuring inclusive education is effectively implemented and maintained.
Goals and Objectives	<p><b>General Goal:</b> To improve the skills, teamwork, and well-being of teachers in the Mandaue City Division through a structured professional development and support program for implementing inclusive education.</p> <p><b>Specific Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve teachers' knowledge and skills in inclusive education strategies such as Differentiated Instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), behavior management, and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development.</li> <li>• Develop a peer coaching and mentoring system that encourages collaboration between SPED and general education teachers.</li> <li>• To improve teacher well-being and resilience through wellness programs and peer-support systems.</li> <li>• Engage parents, local government units (LGUs), and community organizations in promoting inclusive education.</li> <li>• To develop accessible teaching and learning resources and set up a resource hub for educators.</li> <li>• Create a monitoring and evaluation system that ensures continuous improvement of inclusive education practices.</li> </ul>
Program Components	<p><b>Inclusive Education Training and Workshops</b> Topics: Differentiated instruction, UDL, IEP development, positive behavior support, assistive technology use. Mode: in-person seminars, webinars, and demonstration teaching.</p> <p><b>Peer Coaching and Mentoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration between SPED and general education teachers.</li> <li>• Monthly coaching sessions and peer observations.</li> <li>• Creating a Community of Practice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Teacher Wellness and Resilience Program</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress Management and Mindfulness Workshops.</li> <li>• Counseling services and peer support groups.</li> <li>• Recognition and motivational activities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parent and Community Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent seminars and training on inclusive practices.</li> <li>• Enhancing PTA roles in inclusive programs.</li> <li>• Partnerships with LGUs, NGOs, and private organizations to secure resources.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource Development and Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of affordable and locally accessible instructional materials.</li> <li>• Use of ICT and open-source platforms.</li> <li>• Establishment of a division-level resource hub.</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of competence before and after training.</li> <li>• Gathering feedback from teachers, parents, and learners.</li> <li>• Annual review of program implementation.</li> </ul>

### Implementation Plan (Sample 1-Year Cycle)

PHASE	ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE UNIT
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Phase 1: Orientation & Needs Assessment	Launch of program; baseline survey	Month 1	Division Office, School Heads
Phase 2: Training & Capacity Building	Quarterly workshops on inclusive practices	Months 2–5	Trainers, SPED Experts
Phase 3: Peer Coaching & Mentoring	Lesson study, peer observation, feedback	Months 2–12	Lead Teachers
Phase 4: Teacher Wellness Program	Mindfulness and support sessions	Bi-monthly	Guidance Office, HR
Phase 5: Parent & Community Engagement	Parent training, partnership meetings	Quarterly	PTA, LGU, NGOs
Phase 6: Monitoring & Evaluation	Mid-year and year-end assessment reports	Months 6 & 12	M&E Committee

### V. Expected Outcomes

- Teachers gain practical skills and confidence in running inclusive classrooms.
- Enhanced collaboration between SPED and general education teachers.
- Improved teacher well-being and lowered stress and burnout.
- Parents and community members actively advocate for inclusive education.
- Availability of inclusive teaching resources in schools.
- Sustainable and scalable inclusive education practices within the division.

### VI. Sustainability Measures

- Institutionalize the program within the Division’s Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives.
- Build solid partnerships with LGUs and NGOs to ensure ongoing resource support.
- Establish a pool of master trainers within the division to support ongoing training and mentoring activities.
- Annual review and refinement driven by feedback and monitoring results.

### VII. Budgetary Requirements (*Sample – to be adjusted based on actual resources*)

Item	Estimated Cost (PHP)
Training and Workshop Materials	100,000
Honorarium for Resource Speakers	50,000
Teacher Wellness Activities	30,000
Resource Hub Development	40,000
Parent & Community Engagement Activities	30,000
Monitoring and Evaluation	20,000
Total	270,000

*(The budget may be sourced from DepEd Division Funds, LGU allocations, and NGO partnerships.)*

The proposed Inclusive Teaching Excellence Program (ITEP) provides a comprehensive response to the needs of SPED teachers in Mandaue City Division. It goes beyond basic training by incorporating elements such as wellness, collaboration, resource sharing, and stakeholder engagement—areas that are often neglected in professional growth efforts. By equipping teachers with the necessary skills, promoting their well-being, and fostering teamwork, the program aims to create a genuinely inclusive educational environment where all learners are recognized and empowered. Most importantly, it emphasizes that teachers are at the heart of

inclusion, and supporting them can help students with diverse needs succeed both in school and beyond.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Teachers in Mandaue City demonstrate strong dedication to inclusive education, employing strategies such as differentiated instruction, learner-centered approaches, and emotional support.
2. Inclusive education faces multiple challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, inadequate training, and social or cultural biases. Effective inclusion requires not only placing students in mainstream classrooms but also transforming schools through strategic planning, infrastructure improvement, awareness campaigns, and resource allocation.
3. Inclusive education is a transformative experience for teachers, reshaping their professional identity, pedagogy, and overall well-being. SPED teachers develop patience, flexibility, creativity, and resilience, while deriving personal fulfillment from students' progress. Intentional and passionate teaching within inclusive classrooms fosters professional growth, strengthens beliefs in equity, and reinforces the potential of every child to learn.
4. SPED teachers utilize differentiated instruction, multi-sensory learning, assistive tools, collaborative practices, and active family engagement to support learners with special needs. While teachers exhibit creativity and dedication, systemic constraints, such as limited resources and policy enforcement, restrict the full impact of their efforts. Strengthened collaboration among educators, administrators, and families, along with government-supported initiatives, is vital for meaningful and sustainable inclusion.
5. Social attitudes, cultural perspectives, and community engagement significantly influence SPED teachers' experiences. Inclusive education fosters openness, empathy, emotional intelligence, and a learner-centered mindset among teachers.
6. Teachers recommend fostering awareness and acceptance through school-wide activities and inclusive policies, strengthening support systems, and promoting professional collaboration. They emphasize mentorship, team teaching, mental health support, manageable workloads, and family engagement as essential elements.

## Recommendations

1. SPED teachers are encouraged to engage in continuous professional development on inclusive strategies, leadership, and mental health resilience. They should advocate for manageable workloads, access to teaching assistants, and participate in peer mentoring and collaborative planning to share best practices and strengthen the supportive teaching community.
2. Students should be encouraged to actively participate in classroom activities through differentiated instruction and inclusive learning strategies. Feedback mechanisms must be provided to express their learning needs, and peer-support programs should be promoted to foster empathy, social inclusion, and collaborative learning.
3. Administrators should allocate sufficient resources for inclusive education, including assistive tools, infrastructure, and teacher training.
4. Policymakers are urged to enforce policies that guarantee adequate funding, mandate mental health services, and provide teaching assistants in inclusive classrooms. Clear

guidelines on student-centered approaches and inclusion standards should be developed to ensure consistent implementation across schools.

5. School leaders should foster a culture of diversity and collaboration through awareness campaigns and inclusion task forces. They should support teachers in completing graduate degrees, offer financial assistance, and organize regular professional development sessions on inclusive education and cultural sensitivity.
6. Researcher should disseminate findings through seminars, policy briefs, and advocacy initiatives to inform stakeholders. Collaboration with educational institutions and advocacy groups is encouraged to address systemic gaps, and evidence-based reforms should be recommended to enhance inclusive education practices.

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