

SNED Teachers' Perspectives and Support System on Inclusive Classroom Environment

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the perspectives of Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers and the support systems available to them within inclusive classroom environments. Using a transcendental phenomenological approach, the research examined how SNED teachers understand inclusion and how support systems influence their professional practice. Findings revealed that SNED teachers view inclusive classrooms as learner-centered and equitable spaces that promote belonging, safety, and individualized learning. However, support systems are unevenly implemented. Strong support is mainly derived from parents and external professionals, while administrative support remains limited and inconsistent. These conditions affect the effective implementation of inclusive education. The study further showed that support systems enhance SNED teachers' instructional adaptability, confidence, and competence, while also expanding their roles to include mentoring general education teachers. However, challenges such as fragmented collaboration, increased workload, and overreliance on SNED teachers persist, indicating unequal distribution of responsibilities. Overall, the study concludes that while support systems contribute to inclusive education, their effectiveness is limited by weak coordination and lack of shared responsibility. Inclusive education remains largely dependent on SNED teachers rather than a fully collaborative institutional system.

Keywords: SNED teachers, perspectives, support systems, inclusive classroom environment, phenomenological study.

INTRODUCTION

Today inclusive education has become a key concept for education systems that foster the inclusion of all learners into the same classroom, irrespective of their ability, background and learning needs. This approach is part of a broader trend toward creating learning spaces that are more equitable and responsive to diversity and are based on a recognition of diversity as an integral part of learning. In this context, the role of Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers is important to ensure inclusive classroom environments are effectively implemented. In addition to having a specific teaching role, they are also part of lessons adaptations, classroom modifications and liaising with general education teachers to meet the needs of learners of all types.

Inclusive education is a very important aspect of the country but teachers of SNED are facing difficulties when implementing inclusive practices because of the different levels of institutional and professional support. The success of inclusive classrooms in their role is not just a matter of policy implementation, but support systems are also needed to help teachers carry out their role effectively. These support systems include collaboration among teachers, administrative assistance, access to instructional resources, and opportunities for continuous professional development. If such supports are not in place, inclusive education could be difficult to implement in practice.

It is important to understand the role of support systems in inclusive education because these directly impact the implementation of inclusive practices by SNED teachers in the classroom. Teachers are well supported to adjust teaching, develop strategies for managing diverse learners and ensure effective classes. If teachers are

not adequately supported, they may not be able to fully address learner diversity which can have an impact on the quality of inclusive education.

Recent literature has emphasized the need for effective institutional and professional support systems in order for inclusive education to be effective. UNESCO (2020) states that inclusive education will not only focus on learner placement but will also involve adequate teacher support, collaboration and access to resources to support learner diversity. In the same way, the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2021) emphasizes the need for ongoing professional learning and positive working environments within schools to promote effective inclusive education. Moreover Ainscow et al. (2022) add that in inclusive education, schools need to encourage reflective practice and collaboration between teachers and shared responsibility.

A recent study in the Philippines also underscores the need to have support systems in the effective implementation of inclusive education. In their study, de Guzman and Villanueva (2021) discovered that SNED teachers in public elementary schools are frequently dependent on the assistance of general education teachers and school administrators when dealing with SNED. Likewise, Cruz (2022) noted that limited instructional materials and inadequate training opportunities are still widespread problems faced by SNED teachers, impacting their ability to effectively adopt inclusive practices. Furthermore, Reyes and Santos (2023) highlighted the importance of administrative support and professional development programs on enhancing SNED teachers' confidence and competence in supporting diverse learners in inclusive classrooms.

All these studies have provided evidence that inclusive education policies are in place in the Philippines, but the implementation thereof at the classroom level is dependent on support systems available to SNED teachers and the quality of these systems. This points towards the need to better understand the nature of such support in the actual classroom settings experienced by these teachers.

The aim of this study was to investigate SNED teachers' views on inclusive classrooms and their experience of inclusive teaching in their professional practices. It also explores the instructional support systems that they have to consider and their impact on their professional roles and on the development of inclusive classroom environments. This study took place at Valencia City Central Elementary School, a school actively engaged in inclusive education, within its Special Education (SNED) department.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do SNED teachers conceptualize inclusive classroom environments?
2. What instructional support systems are available to SNED teachers within inclusive classroom environments?
3. How do these support systems influence SNED teachers' instructional adaptability, professional competence, and collaborative roles within inclusive classroom environments?

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to explore how SNED teachers understand and facilitate inclusive classroom environments within their professional practice. It focused on examining their conceptual understanding, the instructional support systems available to them, and how these support systems influence their professional roles and the development of inclusive classroom environments. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Explore the conceptual understanding of SNED teachers regarding inclusive classroom environments.
2. Describe the instructional support systems available to SNED teachers within inclusive classroom environments.

3. Determine how these support systems influence SNED teachers' instructional adaptability, professional competence, and collaborative roles within inclusive classroom environments.

Significance of the Study

The novelty of this study is that it focuses on the experiences of special needs education (SNED) teachers in the teaching of children with special needs. In a way, it aims to illuminate their point of view and the truth of their practice, and this is something that is not sufficiently explored in the current research. In so doing, the study will seek to add to the knowledge of their role in education.

The outcome of the study would deepen the knowledge of early childhood educators in inclusive education and give them a chance to introspect about their practice and daily experience, and development in implementing inclusive classroom environment. They would develop their understanding of design, delivery and facilitation of inclusive learning for young learners with diverse needs. They may continue to develop and tweak their pedagogy to meet the needs of all learners and to be the best they can in supporting the teaching and learning process.

The study would offer SNED teachers the chance to pause and reflect on their practices, experiences on a daily basis, and their professional development with implementing inclusive classrooms. They would have a more in-depth understanding of how to plan, deliver and facilitate inclusive learning for learners with diverse needs. They can keep developing and refining their teaching methods to meet the needs of all pupils and make every effort to ensure that teaching and learning is as effective as possible.

Furthermore, the schools and school managers would improve the support systems, resources and school policies regarding inclusive education. The results would help to pinpoint areas for further development in the use of inclusive practices and to give better support to the SNED teachers. It would be used as a tool to plan for programs, training and activities to improve inclusive education in schools.

Similarly, the teacher education institutions would improve their teacher preparation programs, by training a teacher who was competent in using practical pedagogical methods and who was prepared to work in an environment that supports inclusive education. It can be used as a foundation for creating course content, training and seminars for pre-service teachers.

Similarly, better teaching would be beneficial to the pupils, enabling them to learn in a more supportive and inclusive atmosphere. They would be provided with suitable support, interventions and opportunities for academic and social development in the classroom.

The findings of this study would serve as a good literature resource for future researchers who want to conduct further investigations involving SNED teachers, inclusive classroom and support system in education. From the results of this study, they may identify issues that need to be undertaken for more in-depth and focused research.

Scope of the Delimitation

This study focused on exploring the perspectives of Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers regarding inclusive classroom environments and the instructional support systems available to them. Specifically, it examined how SNED teachers conceptualize inclusive classroom environments, identify the support systems that assist them in implementing inclusive practices, and determine how these support systems influence their professional roles and the development of inclusive classroom environments.

The study was conducted at Valencia City Central School, particularly within the SNED department where inclusive education practices are actively implemented. The participants of the study consisted of three (3) SNED teachers handling learners with Hearing Impairment, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: currently teaching learners with special needs, having at least five years of teaching experience, and willingness to voluntarily participate in the study.

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design guided by the transcendental phenomenological framework of Clark Moustakas (1994). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to obtain in-depth descriptions of the participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and professional practices within inclusive classroom settings.

The study was delimited only to SNED teachers from one public elementary school and did not include general education teachers, school administrators, parents, or learners with special needs. Furthermore, the study focused only on instructional support systems related to inclusive classroom implementation and did not examine student academic performance, policy evaluation, or quantitative measurement of inclusive education effectiveness. The findings were therefore limited to the experiences and perspectives of the selected participants during the conduct of the study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined so as to clarify and standardize the understanding of the most important concepts in this study: The definitions are contextualized in relation to the use of the terms within the context of inclusive education in Philippine schools.

Inclusive education is the process whereby pupils with special educational or learning support needs, such as those with a disability, are educated in mainstream classes. It acknowledges the significance of equity in participation, access and support for all students in accordance with the Department of Education policies on inclusive classrooms.

Inclusive classroom environment is a learning environment that places students with and without special needs in the same classroom. It supports the acceptance, participation and equal opportunities of all learners through modifying teaching approaches, activities and resources to address diversity of learning needs.

SNED teachers are trained teachers who work in inclusive classrooms with learners having various needs. They have a critical role to play in planning, implementing and adapting to the curriculum to ensure that all learners are provided with meaningful and equitable opportunities for learning regardless of their ability.

Support Systems: The coordinating help that parents and health care providers and school administrators offer in the implementation of inclusive classroom practices. This encompasses parent active participation in their learners' communication and reinforcement of learning at home; medical professionals' advice around their learner's individual needs; and administrative support in the form of policies, resources and school leadership.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inclusive Education: Concepts and Principles

Inclusive education is an educational philosophy and reform approach that guarantees all learners – irrespective of ability, socioeconomic status, language and learning differences – access to meaningful educational opportunities. It highlights the importance of seeing classroom diversity as a condition that cannot be prevented and is a natural part of schools which should be ready to meet through responsive systems and practices. Inclusive education is more than just about accommodating and integrating pupils with disabilities; it's about much more radical changes in curriculum design, delivery, assessment and school culture to ensure meaningful inclusion for all pupils.

It was Ainscow (2021) who highlighted the need for system change in the sense that schools need to make an active response to learner diversity, rather than trying to make learners fit into the academic system. Inclusion is not a program that is added on, but a process of ongoing improvement which is part of the whole system of education.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) highlighted that inclusive education is based on the human rights and social justice principles. It makes sure that no learner is denied access to school, education or learning because of their disability or difference, and that barriers to participation and learning are proactively removed in

education systems. This involves making sure that not only physical access is provided, but instructional, social and emotional barriers are also addressed which impact learner engagement.

In this context, teachers at SNED play a pivotal role in implementing inclusive education policies in the classroom. They do not only support the delivery of the lesson, but also actively participate in the adaptation of the lesson and assist general education teachers, and ensure that the lesson is meaningfully carried out by the learners. This places SNED teachers as central persons who play a significant role in bridging the gap between inclusive education policy and classroom implementation.

Inclusive Classroom Environment

Inclusive classroom means a learning environment in which all learners are engaged, valued and given equal opportunities to participate in academic and social learning activities. It has student diversity embraced and addressed, respectful relationships, and flexible teaching. Differences are not viewed as obstacles but as part of the environment that should be taken into account when developing plans and instructions.

The term inclusive classroom is used in the Philippine context in light of the policies and guidelines of the Department of Education (2017) which emphasize the learner-centered approach to teaching and the integration of learners with special needs in general education classes. Yet, context factors like large classes, insufficient resources for instruction and teachers' readiness to use inclusive pedagogies pose challenges in the implementation of these policies. These challenges impact on the uniformity and effectiveness of inclusive practice in schools.

Therefore, the SNED teacher has an important role in maintaining the inclusive classroom conditions by supporting instructional changes, in managing the classroom, and in ensuring the active presence of the learner with special needs. They are an important resource to help keep the balance between policy expectations and classroom realities, especially in resource-limited education environments.

Learners with Special Needs in Inclusive Settings

Students in inclusive classrooms with special needs are a heterogeneous group who need differentiated instruction, behavioral and social assistance, and individualized support. This encompasses pupils with learning disabilities, pupils with autism spectrum disorder, pupils with intellectual disabilities or sensory impairments as well as pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties. Every student has his or her own strengths and weaknesses which demand flexible and responsive teaching methods. UNESCO (2020) highlighted that inclusive education should accommodate (adapt) children with disabilities, offer differentiated instruction, and secure opportunities for children to learn equitably. Inclusion is not about placing a student in a general education classroom, it's about ongoing instructional changes that address the needs of the student.

In the Philippines, Montales (2026) discovered that barriers for learners with special needs can be attributed to inadequate assessment tools, lack of instructional materials or lack of teacher preparation. Such restrictions impact the ability of learners to be supported in inclusive classrooms. Tagyamon et al. (2025) also pointed out that the inclusive education policy is being followed in principle, but there are some inconsistencies because of variations in school readiness, teachers' training, and support available.

This study revealed that teacher capacity is a crucial factor for successful inclusion, especially in the case of SNED teachers, who should be able to identify learner needs, be capable of developing appropriate interventions, and who should have the capacity to work with general education teachers. Learners with special needs might not be able to realize the full potential of inclusive education practices without sufficient SNED teacher support.

Roles of SPED Teachers in Inclusive Education

SNED teachers are key players in the application of inclusive education. They serve as instructional partners, interventionists, and advocates for students with special needs. According to Friend and Cook (2021), SNED teachers are professionals who help to work with stakeholders to develop collaborative relationships, create

individual education plans, adapt classroom resources, and assist general education teachers in providing inclusive programming.

In the Philippines, Martin (2026) noted that SNED teachers are very important in bridging policy and practice, but they are also faced with institutional challenges which can hinder their performance. Some of these are: workload pressures, lack of resources, and lack of institutional support. In the face of these limitations, SNED teachers are still critical in promoting inclusive education in a meaningful way in the classroom.

Raguindin and Ping (2025) noted that the competencies that Filipino teachers need to be able to perform an inclusive education are adaptability, collaboration skills and effective implementation of differentiated instruction. Despite this, West and Solar (2023) concluded that there is still a lack of sufficient training for many teachers in inclusive education that impacts their confidence and instruction. Kilag et al. (2024) also highlighted that the Philippines' special education system remains plagued with structural and systemic issues, including limited access to resources and training opportunities. The results of this study indicate that although SNED teachers have well-defined roles, they are very much reliant on institutional support and on professional development opportunities.

Instructional Strategies in Inclusive Classrooms

Instructional strategies that are used in inclusive classrooms are for students with a variety of learning needs and are designed to be flexible and responsive to those needs. Differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, scaffolding, and modified instructional materials are some of the strategies that fall under these. The aim is for all learners, irrespective of ability, to access and engage with the curriculum.

In the Philippines context, Lingayon (2025) reported that teachers readily relied on visual aids, task modifications and peer-assisted learning strategies to assist SEN learners. The implementation of these strategies is inconsistent, however, as a result of limited teacher training, availability of resources, and teacher preparedness.

It shows the critical role of SNED teachers in guiding the instructional planning and in ensuring the teaching method is adapted to learners' needs. They support the general education teacher to effectively and consistently carry out inclusive practices.

Assessment Practices for Diverse Learners

Inclusive assessment practices seek to fairly assess learners, taking into account differences in ability, style of learning, and learner progress. Formative, performance, oral and other flexible assessment practices are included in this.

Montales (2026) discovered that teachers employ alternative assessment methods, such as oral presentations, simple test, project-based outputs, in the Philippines to meet the needs of students with special needs. But, the lack of uniformity in guidelines and inadequate training causes differences in assessment design and application.

This is a reminder that SNED teachers need to be involved in designing inclusive assessment and guiding assessment practices. They are well qualified to ensure that the methods of assessment are suitable, flexible and meet the needs of learners with special educational needs.

Support Systems in Inclusive Education

Inclusive education supports are a partnership between community, parent(s), school leaders and teachers. These systems play a vital role in providing learners with special needs with support on an ongoing and continuous basis. Ainscow (2021) highlighted that inclusive education is most effective when it is backed by good cooperation and shared responsibility by all concerned. Inclusion is the responsibility of the whole school system and not just one individual teacher.

In the Philippines, Tagyamon et al. (2025) and Kilag et al. (2024) identified that support systems are present but occasionally these are undermined by resource constraints, lack of coordination, and differing levels of engagement among stakeholders. The constraints impact on the sustainability and effectiveness of inclusive practice within schools.

It implies that teachers in SNED have an important function to enhance the support systems by coordinating interventions, assisting in fostering collaboration among stakeholders and ensuring continuity of support for learners with special needs.

Challenges and Impact of SPED Teacher Support

The SNED teachers have to deal with several challenges in the implementation of inclusive education, such as excessive workload, lack of resources and lack of training opportunities. These problems may impact their capacity to provide consistent effective instructional support and interventions. S. Sharma and Sokal (2020) highlighted that teacher self-efficacy has a crucial importance in the effective implementation of inclusive education. Confident teachers are more likely to engage in effective inclusive practices and make adjustments to the teaching.

Despite such difficulties, effective support from the teacher of the SNED has been associated with higher quality teaching, better classroom management, and greater involvement of learners. A lack of congruence between policy and its practical application in the classroom has been a constant challenge in inclusive education in the Philippines, as mentioned by Lingayon (2025).

In general, the literature indicates that SNED teacher support is a crucial element to the success of inclusive education and directly affects the implementation of inclusive education in the classroom.

Research Gap

Despite the growing interest in inclusive education in the Philippines, most studies have centered on the outcomes of inclusive education, policies of the institutions, and overall teacher attitudes towards inclusive education. Although these studies offer important information on inclusive education, they typically focus on the macro-level and offer little consideration for the work experiences of Special Needs Education (SNED) teachers who are actually working to implement inclusive practices in the classroom.

The curriculum adaptation, the involvement of the learners, and systemic changes from a policy and institutional point of view are the predominant concerns in the literature. However, these are not sufficient to explain how SNED teachers perceive, interpret, and experience the instructional support systems that influence the teachers' day-to-day work in inclusive classrooms. What happens within a real classroom environment with regard to collaboration and support, administrative help, and professional development, therefore, is not well understood.

In addition, the importance of support systems for inclusive education is well known, but most of the discussions on this focus on a descriptive and general level, with little attention paid to the reality of support systems as seen from the SNED teachers. There is a lack of understanding about the effect of such support structures on teachers' professional roles, classroom decisions and practices in real schools, especially in the Philippines, where inclusive education is still a developing field, and there is limited access to resources and implementation.

In this regard, the objective of the present study is to examine SNED teachers' views and experiences regarding inclusive classroom environments and the instructional supports they have. This study will aim to provide a more contextualized approach towards understanding the implementation of inclusive education in practice and to help expand the implementation of more responsive, sustainable, and teacher-centered support that can be implemented in the Philippine context.

Theoretical Framework

Clark Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological framework is used as the basis for this study. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that aims to comprehend and describe individuals' lived experience as they experience it. Most of Moustakas' work is based on his belief that one needs to return to the things themselves, that one needs to grasp the “essence” of experience as it is experienced by the participants. One important aspect of this framework is the act of ‘bracketing’ or ‘epoche’ (setting aside) whereby the researcher suspends his or her own assumptions and biases to give the voice of the participants the autonomy it deserves. In addition, Moustakas describes systematic procedures that culminate in the discovery of the essence of a shared experience: horizontalization, the clustering of meanings and the formation of textural and structural descriptions. These processes offer a sound and systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data.

Moustakas' phenomenological approach is suitable for this study because it fits the purpose of the research of exploring and understanding lived experiences of SNED teachers in inclusive classroom settings. This research is not intended to determine the quantity of variables or to make any causal claims; it is designed to reveal the meaning(s) SNED teachers give to the supports they experience in their professional life. The framework allows for an investigation of teachers' perceptions, interpretations, and reactions to different types of support such as administrative, collegial, professional development, and instructional resource assistance.

Support systems in the context of inclusive education in the Philippines are usually talked about in terms of policies and institutional set up. But these views may not necessarily reflect experiences in real classrooms. The present study uses the phenomenological method of Moustakas to go beyond the superficial description and offer an insight into the realities which SNED teachers are confronted with. It shows their own reflections, challenges, and strategies related to helping them practice in an inclusive way. The framework used will enable the findings to be based on the experiences of the participants, giving insight into the impact of the supports on their work and on the effectiveness and sustainability of inclusive education.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research that was done in this study was a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology was chosen because the study sought to understand and explore the SNED teachers' perspective and their support system of the inclusive classroom environment, including their perception, interpretation and their own sense of meaning of their experiences in relation to the support system, the teaching practices and professional development in the inclusive classroom. In this way, the researcher could transcend the surface and reflect on how deeply SNED teachers experienced the situations in the real classroom, and also gain insight into their personal experiences, reflections, and daily life, while avoiding the limitations of descriptive texts.

In particular, the transcendental phenomenological approach of Clark Moustakas (1994) was used, as it was deemed appropriate because its systematic and rigorous process was suitable for analyzing lived experience and maintaining the voice of the participant as central. Epoche or bracketing was used to suspend personal assumptions in order to allow the researcher to present the participants' views accurately. In addition, the process of horizontalization, clustering of meanings and the construction of the textural and structural descriptions supported a comprehensive and structured analysis of SNED teachers' experiences. This approach was tailored to the study's purpose of discovering meaning instead of measuring variables and allowed for an understanding of support systems, challenges and professional growth experienced by SNED teachers in inclusive classroom settings.

Research Setting

The study was carried out in Valencia City Central School, as it provides an appropriate framework for the study of inclusive education practices. The school was chosen because it has developed the SNED classrooms

which are organized based on the needs and type of disability of the learners. This allows for a more in-depth and more focused discussion of how SNED teachers manage and support a diverse group of learners in an inclusive setting.

In addition, the school was deemed to be a suitable context for the study as it allows the research to have direct access to the SNED teachers who are involved in inclusive classroom teaching. This allowed the researcher to obtain valuable information and personal experience on issues of supports, difficulties and practices related to inclusive education, which made the data collected more relevant and reliable, as it was directly obtained from teaching situations.

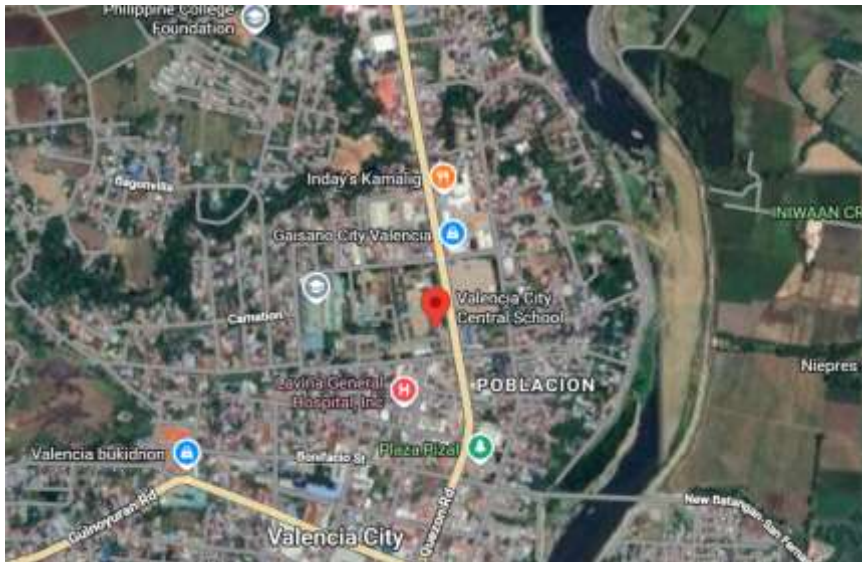


Figure 1. Geographic Location of Valencia City Bukidnon



Figure 2. Location of Valencia City Central School

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used in this study to identify SNED teacher participants who have pertinent and immediate experiences with inclusive classroom instruction. Participants were chosen from Valencia City Central School, based on specific criteria to ensure that they could provide rich and meaningful insights related to the phenomenon under investigation. The selection criteria were as follows: SNED teachers from at least three different specializations, who are currently teaching the SNED or teachers who have learners with special needs in inclusive classes with their consent to participate in the study. It was decided that the selection criteria to be used in this study would be taught SNED teachers from at least three different specializations, currently

working in SNED classes or teachers who teach learners with special needs in inclusive classes with their agreement and are willing to participate in the study.

This sampling was seen to be suitable as it ensured that only SNED teachers who had a significant and diverse amount of experience in inclusive education practices were sampled. The study was able to include a variety of but relevant perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education as the participants were selected with specializations and large years of teaching. This enabled the researcher to collect rich and meaningful data that addressed the study purposes.

Participants of the study

Three (3) SNED teachers from Valencia City Central School made up the participants. A school that was included in the study was a school with at least three different specializations, and in which learners with special needs are being taught in a SNED setting, and with at least 5 years of teaching experience, and where the school voluntarily joined the study. The following criteria were used to select the participants.

Participant 1 - SNED Teacher who is teaching students with a Hearing Impairment.

Participant 2 - SNED Teacher working with students who have Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Participant 3 - SNED Teacher (teaching students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD))

Research Instrument

The main research tool was a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide which consisted of open-ended questions. The questions for the interviews were drawn up to get detailed descriptions of participants' experiences, strategies, and reflections on teaching children with special needs. Further, the interview guide was pretested and validated by the adviser for its appropriateness, clarity and to ensure that it meets the objectives of the study. The data from the sessions were analyzed by coding and then analyzing themes, which involved identifying the key statements in the data, categorizing them into meaningful units, and organizing them into themes to identify common patterns in participants' answers.

Data Gathering Procedure

A request letter was written to the principal of the SNED department in Valencia City Central School, where the SNED program is implemented. Once approved, the principal was notified to the selected teachers about the study and made it easier for them to schedule the data collection as per their availability. The participants were also asked about their preferred interview method, and they chose to be interviewed as a group because they have the same work and timing requirements.

The interview was conducted in an orderly and fluent manner, in which every interviewee responded to the questions with insights and experiences. The conversation was around 56 minutes long, during which the presenters shared a lot of rich information about their own classroom experiences. Responses were kept confidential and remained confidential, and only utilized for the purpose of the study.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was done through a phenomenological approach in which thematic analysis was used to systematically organize the data, present the SNED teachers' views and support in creating an inclusive classroom environment in a clear and coherent manner. This process allowed for a close examination of lived experiences of SNED teachers and meaningful interpretation of these experiences in relation to the research agenda.

In organizing and analyzing the data, each research question posed in the SOP was used as the main guide. The participants responses were continually revisited and ordered by each individual specific SOP, to keep the

focus on their thoughts on inclusive classrooms and the support structures that effect their practice. This enabled the analysis to stay within the scope of the study purpose.

Key findings from the responses given by the participants were noted. These meaningful statements were then condensed into codes which summarized the major ideas and expressions. The coded data then were sorted into multiple categories of similar and patterned data to create the emerging themes. Themes are each a key component of the views of SNED teachers about inclusive classrooms and the supports that influence and sustain their teaching practices.

Figures were prepared to demonstrate the data reduction process, in order to present analysis clearly. These correspond to the transformation of significant statements into codes, codes into categories and categories into the resulting themes. This process illustrated the systematic organization and interpretation of the qualitative data which led to the development of a structured understanding of the SNED teachers' perspectives and support systems in inclusive classroom settings.

Moreover, the data analysis process was conducted within the framework of transcendental phenomenological method of Clark Moustakas (1994) that focuses on understanding the lived experience of the participants by reflecting and interpreting the data carefully. The researchers used the practice of epoche (bracketing) when analyzing the data by suspending their personal assumption or bias to focus on how the participants experienced and perceived what was going on. The analysis also included locating the important utterances by horizontalizing, theming related meanings, and formulating descriptions that captured the essence of participants' experience. This framework was systematic and rigorous, contributing to the credibility and depth of the findings of the study about the SNED teachers' perspectives and support systems in inclusive classroom environments.

Ethical Consideration

In order to protect, respect and uphold the dignity and rights of all of the participants, the study used strict ethical guidelines throughout the research process. The researchers wrote a formal letter to the research adviser before the data were collected to let him know that they are planning to do the study. The Dean signed and noted this letter in accordance with this as an official approval to continue the research. Obtaining permission from a formal school request to the school principal of Valencia City Central Elementary School (under the SNED department), a formal request was made to obtain permission for the study to be conducted at this school setting.

After providing sufficient information on the purpose of the study, procedures to be followed and the rights of the participants, informed consent was obtained from all selected participants following approval from the school administration. All participants in the study volunteered, and they were explained that they could stop joining the study at any time without consequences or penalties.

Complete confidentiality and anonymity was adhered to throughout the study. All of the findings were presented anonymously, and all data was coded to ensure anonymity of the participants. The information collected was used only for academic purposes and was kept securely so as not to be accessed by anyone without permission. Audio recording and transcription were carefully carried out and only the researchers had access to these.

Another important aspect of the study was to ensure that the participants did not feel any harm, discomfort or pressure during the interview process. The researchers treated the participants with respect, professionalism and sensitivity throughout the process, particularly when they were educators sharing their personal professional experiences with the inclusion of others in their classrooms.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The researcher used the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative phenomenological study. The following criteria were used to enhance the

findings of the SNED teachers' perspectives on inclusive classroom environments and instructional support system to make it more accurate, consistent, and reliable.

The credibility was achieved by capturing semi-structured interviews which enabled participants to freely share their life experiences and views. The researcher did thorough and careful reading of the responses from the interviews, and made sure to reflect the meaning(s) of the participants with fidelity. Additionally, member checking was observed by ensuring accuracy during the process of the interviews by clarifying the responses given by the participants to ensure they were not misunderstood.

Transferability was supported by the detailed descriptions of participants, setting and procedures. The context of the study is clearly presented in this study and the experiences of the SNED teachers in inclusive classroom settings at Valencia City Central School can be used by future researchers and readers to see if the findings are applicable to similar classroom or educational settings.

The dependability was ensured by undertaking a systematic and organized process of research. The interviewer used the same interview questions, data collection methods and analysis of themes all through the study. Certain statements, codes, categories and themes were recorded with great care to make sure that all data analysis steps were logical, traceable and consistent.

The practice of bracketing or epoche, using the transcendental phenomenological approach of Clark Moustakas (1994) was used to achieve confirmability. The researcher took every effort to avoid their own prejudices or assumptions while making sure that the results reflected the actual experiences and opinions of the participants, and not the researcher's own. Furthermore, the transcriptions of interviews, coding procedures and the thematic categorizations were scrutinized to ensure objectivity and transparency in the interpretation of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study based on interview data. The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. It highlights the participants' lived experiences, insights, and perspectives in relation to the research questions, supported by relevant literature

Frame 1. Inclusive Classroom as Safe and Collaborative Space

Significant statements from participant	Codes	Theme
““a place where every child belongs...” “a learning space where every single student... feels safe, valued, and empowered to succeed.”	sense of belonging, safety, and learner value	Inclusive learning environment characteristics.
“classroom that is conducive to learning...” “receives the support they need to succeed...”	supportive and responsive learning environment	
“classroom values differences in abilities, culture, language, and learning styles...” “every student... is given equal opportunity to access quality education...”	equity and respect for diversity	
“place where SNED teachers collaborate seamlessly...” “structures that bring inclusivity to life.”	collaborative and structural support for inclusion	

The participants identified an inclusive classroom as a place of belonging, safety, support, equity and collaboration. They saw it as “a place where every child belongs” and “a learning space where every single student... feels safe, valued, and empowered to succeed,” emphasizing qualities focused on emotional support and affirmation. They also noted that inclusion is demonstrated in an “environment that is conducive to learning”, where the “learner receives the support they need to succeed”, suggesting a responsive learning environment that will meet a diversity of learner needs. They also said that every student is given equal opportunity to access quality education and that the classroom values differences in abilities and culture, language and learning styles, highlighting equity and respect for differences as key elements of inclusion. Finally, they highlighted the importance of “place where SNED teachers collaborate seamlessly” and “structures that bring inclusivity to life” which they believe are supported by collaborative practice and institutional support.

The responses reflect the SNED teachers' view of inclusive classroom environment as a multidimensional space that goes beyond just physically including the learners with special needs. Inclusion is defined as a collaborative, emotional safety, equitable and instructional responsive process. Belonging, acceptance and support are regularly mentioned as relational and pedagogical processes of inclusion, alongside the recognition of learner diversity as the basis for inclusion. It implies that inclusion is not a state of being but a practice that is set as a continuous process in the interactions in class and in shared responsibility for the class.

In this view inclusive education is understood as a lived, practice-based experience, where inclusion is realized in the day-to-day practice of teaching, responsive teaching and mutual engagement of teachers and school systems. It foregrounds the importance of creating supportive classroom environments, flexible instructional approaches, and effective partnerships between and among educators and other stakeholders in the context of effective inclusion.

Collaboration among teachers and stakeholders, and institutional support systems that help implement inclusive education in the classroom, help sustain inclusive education in the Philippines, as mentioned by Tagyamon et al. (2025). Similarly, Ainscow (2021) highlighted the need for a systemic change in education to achieve inclusive education, where schools are proactive in addressing the diversity of learners, and do not depend on the learner adapting to the school's structures. These viewpoints coalesce to solidify the participants' understanding of an inclusive classroom as a space for responsive, equitable, and mutually maintained learning, based on shared responsibility and flexibility.

Frame 2. Parental and Professional Support Systems

Significant statements from participants	Codes	Themes
“Parents are the strongest support because they always want to be involved.”	strong parental involvement	parental support in inclusive education
“Parents also support learning at home by helping them sa ilahang assignments, gatuon sila sa school lessons, and gina encourage jud nga mag tarong ug skwela..”	parental reinforcement of learning at home	
“Collaboration with Medical Professionals, Speech Therapy etc.”	multidisciplinary collaboration support	external professional support systems

As you can see from the table, parents are seen as the most important source of support as they are actively engaged in their children's learning. This is under the category of support in inclusive education as they help with assignments, guide lessons at home, and constantly encourage their children. Furthermore, the table shows that external professional support systems are linked to collaboration with services such as speech therapists. The results show that instructional assistance is primarily provided by two sources: parents and professionals.

Parents and health workers are the dominant providers of support because they are important to sustaining and advancing learning. There is continuity in the learner's development and parents support this at home, reinforcing the teaching in school. This makes them very critical allies of SNED teachers. Throughout the process, medical professionals offer their expertise and interventions, tailored to meet individual needs, including those related to speech and behavioral development. If the teachers at SNED are not necessarily qualified in all of these, professionals have to be involved in collaboration. The instructional support goes beyond the classroom and is based on home support and expert support.

Parents are a vital resource for SNED teachers, as children with special needs don't stop learning in the classroom. Parents who follow up on lessons, guide homework, and reinforce routines, make instruction consistent and effective. Skills learned in school may not be used or sustained if not supported. Meanwhile, interdisciplinary cooperation is required when learners require interventions beyond the classroom, such as medical care. For instance, a child with a speech problem may need structured speech therapy which a SNED teacher may not be able to deliver. Here, the teacher implements strategies during the class, and the therapist works on the individual learner's developmental needs, thus providing a holistic approach and support system for the learner.

This is indicative of the actual situation in inclusive classrooms in the Philippines, where resources within schools are sometimes limited. This means that SNED teachers rely upon support outside of class to cater to the needs of individual learners. The lack of instructional materials and assessment tools makes it more challenging for teachers to meet all learner differences on their own, making external support more important, as discussed by Montales (2026). Likewise, Lingayon (2025) reported that teachers are also attempting to implement inclusive strategies but their success is hindered due to lack of training and resources. The reasons parents and professionals are the most effective sources of instructional assistance are explained by these conditions. Thus, the instructional support system is not only a formal set up but also a practical reaction on the practical issues in the classroom. SNED teachers respond by establishing positive links with parents and liaising with professionals to provide learners with ongoing and suitable support. This demonstrates that inclusive education is best implemented not only within the school but also in partnership between the school, the home and specialized services.

Frame 3. Barriers in Inclusive Education

Significant statements from participants	Codes	Themes
“The administration is "passively supportive...” “...Kulang gihapon ang support when it comes to the actual implementation..” Systemic support... remains poor.” “lack of support turns””inclusion” into a name only”	limited administrative involvement	leadership and administrative limitations
“they should provide more professional development and specialized training...” “Lack of training... for general education teachers para mo handle ug children with special needs.” “It is disheartening to work hard to prepare a student for mainstreaming... only to find that there is no welcoming environment for them once they are ready.” Limited time for collaboration...”	limited training opportunities	inadequate professional preparation for inclusive education

“Limited availability of resources and materials...”	lack of instructional materials	resource constraints
“Support is a mix of high and low engagement...” “Systemic support... remains poor.”	weak implementation structure	weak systemic support
“High pupil-teacher ratio (25:1 or 30:1)...”	large class sizes	classroom structural constraints
“Resistance to mainstreaming...”	negative attitudes toward inclusion	attitudinal resistance to inclusion

The study shows a number of recurring challenges in implementing inclusive education as follows: Weak leadership and administrative support, inadequate professional preparation, lack of instructional resources, weak systemic implementation, overcrowded classrooms and attitude resistance to inclusive education. Administrative support was described as passive and inconsistent, sometimes shown in policy not practice. They also indicated that there were not enough opportunities for training, inadequate teaching resources, excessive pupil-teacher ratio, and resistance to mainstreaming learners with special needs. So, the results indicated that there is a high level of awareness of inclusive education and a low level of implementation.

The data indicate that the problem is not that inclusive education policies are not in place, but that there are no effective implementation mechanisms. The frequent references to "limited support", "lack of training" and "weak implementation" suggest that roles and responsibilities are unbalanced and placed on SNED teachers, but without institutional support. This involves SNED teachers having to teach inclusively when they do not have access to key structural supports including trained teachers, resources, facilities, manageable classes, or administrative supports. More seriously, limitations in resources and too many students in the classroom turn the practice of inclusion into a compliance issue instead of a pedagogically viable one. The structural weaknesses are further underscored by the presence of attitudinal resistance, which indicates that inclusion is still not being fully entrenched in school culture. The system does not actually fail to fail, but rather it fails in the act of consistency and alignment of support from all levels.

From the data, the gaps in inclusive education identified are the result of a lack of uniformity and fragmentation of implementation within the school. Inclusion is not a uniform process but rather one that varies with the quality of leadership, preparedness of teachers and resources. This implies that learners with special needs are placed in unequal learning environments with the quality of inclusion dependent on context not policy. The differences in support reported by participants indicate that there are not standard institutional procedures for providing support, and therefore inclusion is being implemented in different ways across classrooms and schools. This leaves a gap in the equity of inclusive education which consequently results in unequal educational experiences.

The results show that inclusive education is still structurally underdeveloped in practice, despite the high policy level. This is aligned with the UNESCO (2020) which highlighted that inclusive education will not be realised unless the barriers of a system, instruction and attitude are proactively removed to enable meaningful participation of all learners. Furthermore, Sharma and Sokal (2020) determined that teachers' self-efficacy is also a key factor in the implementation of inclusive education and a lack of training and support directly impacts teachers' ability to effectively implement inclusive strategies. Some of the studies mentioned below support the present results, some of the main problems that still have to be addressed are weak implementation structures, lack of teacher training, lack of resources and resistance to inclusion. Hence, the study highlights the need for inclusive education to be firmly grounded in the consistent provision of systemic support in schools, and the enhancement of teacher capacity to close the policy-practice gap in schools.

Frame 4. Unequal Instructional Responsibility

Significant statements from participants	Codes	Themes
“..they often step back and leave the heavy lifting to the SNED teachers..” “deferring to us as the only "experts" on the matter...” “...mahitabo ra gyapon nga kami ra mag handle sa bata kay mag lisod ang general education teacher once they are mainstreamed..”	overdependence on SNED teachers’	unequal instructional responsibility

The first statement refers to the fact that the administration “often delegates the heaviest workload to the SNED teachers” suggesting that not all the work is shared equally. The second statement underlines the importance of SNED teachers to act as the only experts on the matter and so to play a central role in dealing with learners with special needs. The third statement also clarifies that “once the learner with special needs is mainstreamed, the general education teacher ends up in a situation that he/she cannot manage the learner with special needs” indicating that the GED teacher must take over the responsibility of managing the student with special needs in an inclusive setting when he/she is unable to do so. These statements were coded as overdependence on SNED teachers, and categorized under unequal instructional responsibility.

This is an obvious inequity in instructional roles in inclusive education as seen in the table. SNED teachers are always put at the centre of the teaching process by learners with special needs, rather than being shared to. General education teachers are less likely to retreat or diminish their roles when learners are mainstream, and most of the responsibility for instruction will fall on the shoulders of the SNED teacher(s). This is a problem since inclusive education is about collaborative teaching and shared responsibility. But this is not what the data reveals, as the principle is not fully implemented. The need for a number of SNED teachers suggests that inclusion is being seen as a specialist rather than a shared responsibility within a classroom. This causes role inequality whereby the SNED teachers are overburdened while the general education teachers are more passive participants.

The disparities in the results are part of the gap between inclusive education policy and classroom practice. The statements emphasize the collaboration aspect, although the general education teachers are not seen as the experts in dealing with learners with special needs. “Only experts on the matter” is a dependency mentality, in which the responsibility for instruction is handed over to specialists. This leads to inconsistencies as inclusive education involves the involvement of SNED teachers and general education teachers in the co-planning, co-teaching and co-assessment of learners. But, instead of shared systems, it is people (SNED teachers) who are responsible for inclusion. This also indicates a lack of confidence, training or readiness of general education teachers in their ability to work with diverse learners, which contributes to differential participation in the inclusive practices.

The results suggest that the over-reliance on SNED teachers causes unequal instructional responsibility in inclusive classrooms. The SNED teachers are continually seen as the main workers for learners with special needs and the general education teachers are often pushed aside after learners have been mainstreamed. This is an indicator of the lack of a system of inclusive education and its reliance on the SNED teachers as the primary “experts”, thus creating a lack of balance in workload and a lack of collective responsibility. According to West and Solar (2023), many teachers are not properly prepared in inclusive education and face the consequences of a lack of confidence and limited participation, thus relying more on SNED teachers.

Frame 5. Influence on SNED Teachers’ Roles

Significant statements from participants	Codes	Themes
“forces me to be more resourceful...”	resourcefulness and	instructional

“I am able to use more appropriate and effective methods...”	instructional adaptation	adaptability
“strengthens my confidence, enhances my professional competence...” “It helps me feel more confident...mag-manage sa behavior...”	confidence and teaching competence	professional empowerment
I also provide support to other professionals by training general education teachers on disability awareness”	peer training and support	collaborative capacity building

The first statement implies that SNED teachers have to be more resourceful and able to use more appropriate and effective methods, which means they have a higher degree of instruction adaptability. In the second statement, it emphasized that it “strengthens my confidence, enhances my professional competence... It helps me feel more confident... mag-manage sa behavior...” which show the incremented professional confidence and teaching competence. The third statement emphasizes SNED teachers' role in peer support and capacity building by conducting disability awareness training for general education teachers. These statements were categorized as resourcefulness and instructional adaptation, confidence and teaching skills, and peer training and support, respectively and were grouped under instructional adaptability, professional empowerment, and collaborative capacity building.

The table indicates that the instructional support systems positively influence the profession of SNED teachers directly. The first is that SNED teachers develop themselves to be more flexible and resourceful in their approach to a variety of learners. The necessity to adapt instruction and respond to various learner needs forces them to create more effective teaching strategies, rather than following a rigid approach. Secondly, SNED teachers' confidence and competence in teaching is enhanced by the support systems. They learn how to handle behavior issues, change lessons, and handle challenging situations in the classroom from experiences in inclusive classrooms. This means that instructional support is not just about enhancing the skills, but also establishing the psychology of strength and teaching confidence. Thirdly, SNED teachers go beyond teaching in the classroom to train and mentor general education teachers. This is a change from service providers to capacity builders within the school system. The movement of SNED teachers to take on additional responsibilities is also indicative of a lack of general education teachers' readiness. This has two effects; firstly, it increases SNED teachers' instructional capacity and secondly, it expands the professional roles of SNED teachers, which can result in more work for them but can also lead to more opportunities for them to support the implementation of inclusive education.

The table indicates that SNED teachers are not only becoming more adept at meeting the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms, but are also becoming more at ease and flexible in becoming multi-role professionals. Stronger instructional strategies and resilience develop as they continually adapt to their everyday experiences. The results also suggest that there is a positive impact of SNED teachers' active involvement in support systems on improving inclusive classroom environment. They are effective in adapting instruction, regulating behavior, and supporting their colleagues, which directly impacts the classroom's responsiveness to learner diversity. But what is also apparent from this is the vital role of the SNED teacher, as both an instructional specialist as well as a capacity builder; a role imbalance in inclusive education perhaps? This adds to inclusion, but also demonstrates how much the system relies on their expertise to function well.

The results suggest that instructional support systems have a positive effect on teachers' professional roles and inclusive classroom environment development for SNED teachers. Such systems provide them with greater instructional flexibility, boosted confidence and extended professional reach to include mentoring and training of general education teachers. Consequently, SNED teachers are important agents of change in the field of both teaching and learning and inclusive practice in schools. As suggested by Friend and Cook (2021), SNED teachers are also important agents of the process of teaching as well as collaborating and developing the capacities of other teachers, thus affecting the process of inclusive education in general.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The study findings suggest that SNED teachers consider an inclusive class to be a learner-centred and equitable space in which belonging, safety and individualisation are core. Inclusion is not just about having a diverse group of learners in a single classroom, it is a process that is ongoing and planned for, and requires responsive teachers, a collaborative approach by all parties and robust institutional support to facilitate meaningful participation for all learners.

Looking at instructional support systems, the results show that the SNED teachers are mainly dependent on parental involvement and working with outside professionals like therapists, specialists etc. While these supports are critical in supporting learning outside of the classroom, they are not well-integrated, well-coordinated, or well-supported by school-level administration, and are not effective in maintaining inclusive practices overall.

As far as the effect of these systems are concerned, the study has revealed that the instructional support enhances the adaptability of SNED teachers, their confidence and competence in dealing with various learners. It also expands their professional roles, particularly in mentoring and training general education teachers. This growth is however, not paralleled by greater workload or a greater degree of collaboration, as inclusive education is still not seen as a shared institutional responsibility, but remains mainly in the hands of SNED teachers.

The overall finding of the study is that support systems in the form of instructions can improve inclusive education practice, but are limited in their implementation due to the lack of integration, imbalanced roles, and lack of coordination within the system. This accounts for the fact that in practice inclusive education is only partially realized and, to a lesser extent, relies on individual commitment rather than a fully functioning and functioning institutional framework. The conclusions also highlight that inclusive education can only be achieved when the support systems are intentionally designed, implemented and shared equally across all stakeholders, thus making it an intentional and collective approach to education.

Recommendation

Overall, the following recommendations are made based on the results and conclusions of the study and to improve the implementation of inclusive education in the real school situation in order to strengthen the instructional support systems of SNED teachers:

First, more proactive and hands-on engagement of school administrators in implementing inclusive education. Given the observations of minimal and inconsistent administrative support, administrators need to move beyond a passive supervisory role and cultivate systems of regular monitoring of inclusion practices, clear instructional direction, and participation in planning and implementation processes. This is a critical step to fill the gap between inclusive education policies and being put into practice in the classroom.

Secondly, education responsibility between SNED teachers and general education teachers should be reinforced because it has been seen that the general education teacher is highly relying on SNED teachers as “experts”. Schools should foster cooperative arrangements of teaching that involve both groups in lesson planning, teaching, and learning assessment of students of diverse needs. This will help to minimize instructional imbalance and support a more sustainable inclusive practice.

Thirdly, it is important to institutionalise structured collaboration time in the schools. In view of the lack of coordination between the various stakeholders highlighted in the study, regular and scheduled meetings between SNED teachers, general education teachers, parents and external stakeholders (such as therapists) should be encouraged. This will provide ongoing communication, measure learner progress in a consistent manner, and enable more streamlined intervention strategies.

Fourth, Continuous professional development programmes should be offered to SNED teachers as well as general education teachers. As it concerns the limited preparedness of general education teachers and the increasing responsibilities of SNED teachers, training should be provided to develop general education teachers' teaching skills according to the principles of inclusive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, classroom management of diverse learners and collaborative teaching.

Fifth, workload distribution and classroom conditions should be assessed taking into consideration the additional role played by SNED teachers. Schools should solve the problem of large class size, inadequate teaching materials, and staffing shortages to effectively apply individualized teaching to SNED teachers, reduce the load pressure of SNED teachers, and focus on teaching.

Finally, the continued involvement of parents and external professionals with the study should be maintained and enhanced, as they are key support systems. Parent involvement in the school should be established and be regular, including communication, training provided for parents and their involvement in planning interventions, and ongoing collaboration with therapists and specialists to support learners outside of school.

Generally, the recommendations are based on the study's main results, in which it is emphasized that inclusive education is more effective and sustainable in practice when there is a greater coordination, balanced responsibility and more structured support system.

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