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Learning Roadblock: A Convergent Parallel Study of Inclusive Education Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education aims to provide every student with an equal opportunity to succeed; however, for many, the reality falls short of this goal. This study explored the experiences of students from the College of Teacher Education in inclusive classrooms and the challenges they face. By employing a convergent parallel mixed-method design, the researchers synthesized survey information with personal experiences, contributing to a broader understanding of the learning barriers present. A sample of 100 students, selected purposefully, completed a 40-item Likert-scale questionnaire, while seven students participated in individual interviews, and eight engaged in focus groups. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Kruskal-Wallis test, indicating that students across various programs and year levels shared similar perspectives. The results revealed a significant perception of learning barriers overall, with a very high level of reported issues linked to the school context and prevailing attitudes, followed by educational responses and resource availability. From the interviews and discussions, two key themes emerged: gaps in adaptive teaching practices and disruptions in the learning environment resulting from behavioral challenges and emotional strain. These findings indicate that, while inclusive education represents progress, further efforts are necessary. Students advocate for improved teacher preparation, greater access to learning tools, and a school culture that is more understanding, patient, and inclusive of everyone. This study aims to inspire future initiatives in developing learning spaces where all students feel supported and valued.

INTRODUCTION

It has been observed that the education system in the past significantly hindered the prospects of students with disabilities, leading to the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippines. However, with a heterogeneous classroom setup, the learning environment does not inherently ensure effectiveness, as both students and those with disabilities have varying learning capacities and require different levels of attention from the institution and the teacher (Dotzel *et al.*, 2021). Research has shown that mixed-ability groupings often require more time, as teachers must invest additional effort to explain discussions and instructions (Hove, 2022) thoroughly. In addition, most existing research primarily focuses on the viewpoints of teachers and students with disabilities; this study seeks to explore the other side of the equation, understanding the experiences of students and emphasizing the extent of inclusivity in the Philippine education system.

Existing research on the barriers to learning in inclusive education, both nationally and internationally, primarily adopts a quantitative approach and focuses on teachers' perspectives. This lack of emphasis on students' viewpoints has motivated researchers to conduct this study using a mixed-method approach, gathering insights from students at the College of Teacher Education. By employing this approach, the research uncovered concrete ideas and experiences related to the effectiveness of inclusive education, thereby contributing valuable

insights to all stakeholders involved.

This study integrated a mixed-method conceptual framework, combining survey data and student experiences to explore barriers to inclusive education. The survey examined students' views on the school context, prevalent attitudes, resource availability, and educational responses, while interviews and group discussions highlighted issues such as gaps in teaching and disruptions in the learning environment. By merging these findings, the study revealed common patterns, offering schools and educators a clearer understanding of students' needs to create more inclusive and supportive classrooms.

In connection with this, the study draws on Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory, which emphasizes that learning is shaped by social interaction and the cultural environment. In inclusive classrooms, this theory highlights how students, regardless of their abilities, can grow by learning together through collaboration and shared experiences. It supports the idea that inclusive education should promote adaptive teaching and meaningful peer engagement (Grageda *et al.*, 2022).

Another theory supporting this study is Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory, which states that an individual's behavior and attitude change over time as they encounter various environmental systems. In the context of education, students interact with different individuals, affecting the behaviors and attitudes expressed toward them. Students in a classroom

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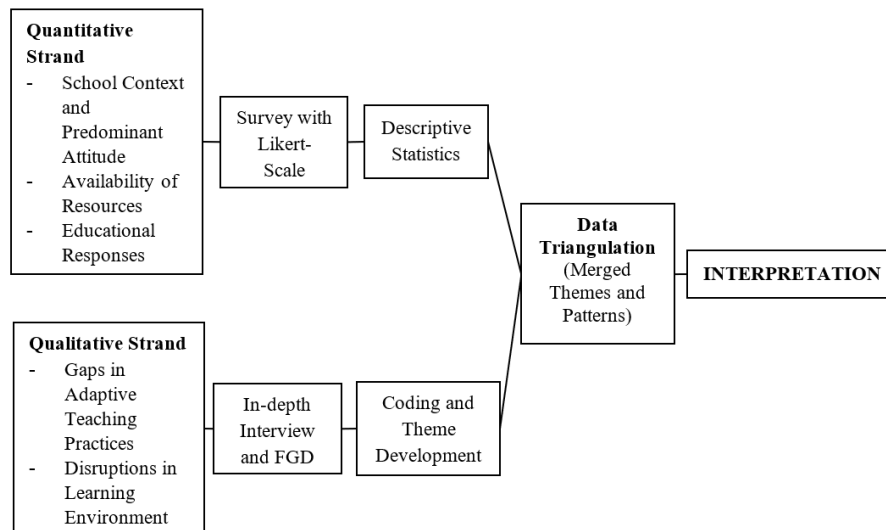


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

make efforts to adapt to the established norms of the learning environment to facilitate learning and interaction with their classmates, teachers, and others involved in the educational setting. Thus, this theory is effective for identifying the barriers to student learning in institutions with inclusive education, as it offers diverse perspectives on how these factors influence their learning experiences (Guy-Evans, 2024).

This study reveals insights into the challenges students face in inclusive classrooms. The researchers collected perspectives and suggestions that alleviated the barriers these students encountered and implemented effective strategies to address them. Additionally, the study aimed to assist teachers in developing more inclusive lesson plans and teaching methods that support inclusive education. Teachers should emphasize the learning outcomes of each lesson, not only for students with disabilities but also for their peers, ensuring that all students can navigate the challenges of inclusivity. Furthermore, the study sought to contribute to the efforts of educational agencies and institutions that aim to promote inclusive education and improve special education programs, ultimately supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4: ensuring quality education. This collaborative approach brings together institutions and agencies to address the needs and aspirations of all learners, including those with disabilities. Most importantly, the findings and discussions of this study will be valuable for future researchers conducting similar inquiries, providing essential information on overcoming the barriers faced by students.

This study examined the extent of perception of barriers to learning in the school context, dominant attitudes, resource availability, and educational responses as perceived by students from the College of Teacher Education. This research also investigated significant differences by program and year level concerning the barriers experienced by CTE students in their perceptions of inclusive education. Furthermore, this study identified

the perceptions of selected students as barriers to student learning in inclusive education. An additional key aspect of this study was the corroboration of qualitative and quantitative data about the barriers to student learning in inclusive education, specifically regarding school context and predominant attitude, availability of resources, and educational response as perceived by college students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In connection with this, Rajashekar (2021) identifies barriers to total school inclusivity, including students' attitudes, a rigid curriculum, bullying, and inadequate collaboration. He suggested strategies such as creating holistic school environments, promoting active engagement between teachers and students, and making appropriate modifications to lesson content. Moreover, Adhikari (2023) notes that insufficient teacher knowledge, lack of disability-friendly infrastructure, and inadequate materials are significant obstacles to educational inclusivity. Similarly, Savinova *et al.* (2024) further highlight barriers such as limited resources, ineffective technology use, insufficient teacher training, and poor recognition of individual needs. Socio-cultural prejudices also create a challenging environment for inclusiveness. Additionally, negative attitudes from both teachers and non-disabled students can adversely affect academic performance, as stated by Nthama & Annie (2019).

A study by Matuota (2024) explored how neoliberalism creates barriers to inclusive education, emphasizing issues such as teacher incompetence and schools' failure to support students with disabilities adequately. As a result, these students often find their exam scores excluded to protect school rankings, leading to grade repetition or dropout. Conversely, Alshahrani (2023) found that inclusive education positively impacts relationships between disabled and non-disabled students. The study showed that prior interactions, time spent together, and collaborative activities helped break down barriers and foster understanding. Furthermore, Nthama & Annie

(2019) argued that when these barriers are properly addressed, students become more independent, improve academically, develop greater self-awareness, and are more likely to complete their education.

Another study highlighting inclusivity challenges in the Philippine context comes from Kilag *et al.* (2024), which identifies limited sources, resistance to change from school faculty and staff, and cultural biases that hinder improvement goals. Furthermore, Allam & Martin's (2021) study makes it clear that special education programs in several schools are situated in poor learning environments, which affect the full implementation of inclusivity. The lack of teaching and learning resources, along with insufficient facilities for inclusiveness, also contributes to this issue, causing school staff to struggle in addressing the individual needs of students.

As noted in Taguibulos' (2020) study, enrolling in mainstream universities is common among students with disabilities due to outdated learning resources and the impracticality of special education schools. He also observed that students with disabilities, especially the deaf, struggle to understand their peers without interpreting, and vice versa. This is also evident in students with autism spectrum disorder, who are often misinterpreted due to their different reactions, which cause non-disabled students to struggle with how to approach and interact with them in the classroom (Cerbo & Rabi, 2019).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Respondents

The researchers of this study contacted students from the College of Teacher Education. For the quantitative part of the research, the total population of CTE is 1,659, and the Raosoft calculator initially suggested a sample size of 313 respondents. However, due to time constraints and limited access to students with the specific experiences needed, the study gathered responses from fewer than 100 participants, as advised by the statistician. While Morgado *et al.* (2017) recommended a minimum of 100 respondents for reliable results in large populations, the smaller sample size was deemed acceptable given the context. To collect the survey data, the researchers used purposive sampling, intentionally selecting participants who possessed relevant qualities aligned with the study's quantitative objectives. As noted by Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling is often employed in mixed-method studies to identify individuals who can offer meaningful insights. For the qualitative part, the researchers utilized the snowball sampling technique during the interview phase. This method enabled them to identify additional participants through referrals from initial respondents who had relevant experience and insights. According to Adi Bhat (2024), snowball sampling is particularly useful when reaching participants who might be hesitant at first but become more willing to engage once they know who referred them. This approach assisted the researchers in expanding their pool of interviewees while ensuring that participants still aligned with the study's focus.

The participants in this study are selected students who have spent a semester as classmates with students with disabilities within the CTE, enrolled in the second semester of academic year 2024-2025. The chosen respondents embody perceptions and experiences from interacting with students with learning disabilities in classroom settings and extracurricular activities. Additionally, the respondents established their learning capacities, behaviors, and attitudes regarding inclusive education based on their firsthand experiences. Given these qualifications, these students provide accurate and valuable insights that are beneficial to this study. Consequently, teachers and students with disabilities are not included in this research. Moreover, students who chose to withdraw from the data collection process were allowed to do so, as their participation was completely voluntary and not obligatory.

Research Instrument

The survey questionnaire was adapted from a study titled "Barriers to Student Learning and Participation in an Inclusive School as Perceived by Future Education Professionals." The study utilized a 5-point Likert scale consisting of 40 items with the following descriptors: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. The first 16 items focused on students' attitudes toward having a classmate with a learning disability. Items 17-24 addressed the availability and accessibility of learning materials. Items 25-40 assessed educational responses from students in inclusive education. To complement this quantitative approach, qualitative questions were designed to understand selected CTE students' perceptions of learning barriers in inclusive education.

The questionnaire used in this study was first validated by two experts using a validation evaluation form, which yielded an average rating of 4.785, indicating it was suitable for pilot testing. With approval from the CTE Dean's office, the pilot test was then conducted. The collected data were encoded and submitted to the study's statistician for reliability analysis. The results showed strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.877 for the first indicator, 0.861 for the second, and 0.813 for the third.

The analysis revealed five ranges of mean scores reflecting the severity of barriers to student learning in inclusive education. A mean range of 4.20-5.00 indicates a very high level, suggesting that students encountered extensive and persistent barriers that significantly hindered their participation, engagement, and success. A mean range of 3.40-4.19, indicating high, suggested that students faced frequent and significant barriers, including limited support services, negative attitudes, and inflexible teaching practices. The range of 2.60-3.39, signifying moderate, reflected occasional and noticeable barriers to learning. A mean range of 1.80-2.59, representing low levels of barriers, indicated that students faced infrequent and minor barriers that could affect motivation and

participation. Finally, a mean range of 1.00-1.79 indicated a very low perception of barriers, meaning there were minimal and rare barriers to learning. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for systematic improvements in school contexts, prevailing attitudes, availability of resources, and educational responses to reduce these persistent barriers within inclusive education.

Design and Procedure

This study employed a convergent parallel design utilizing a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather diverse yet precise information from respondents (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). The data were analyzed separately, with quantitative data examined for significant relationships among variables and qualitative data coded from interviews and observations. Using a mixed-method matrix with a convergent parallel design helps connect qualitative insights with quantitative analysis, thereby enhancing the understanding of the challenges students face in inclusive education (Wilcox *et al.*, 2021).

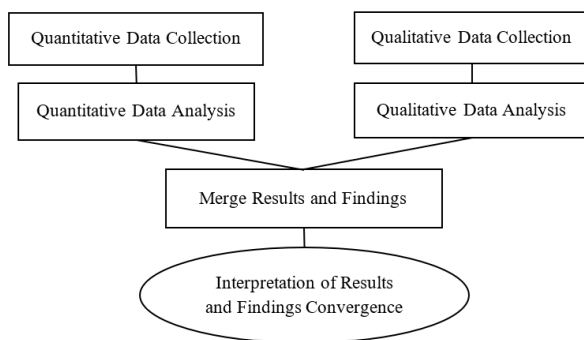


Figure 2: Convergent Parallel Design

The study also identified perceived barriers to student learning in this context. By keeping data analysis independent and synthesizing results during the final interpretation, the convergent parallel design proved beneficial for highlighting diverse yet valuable perspectives (Razali *et al.*, 2019; Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023).

To effectively carry out this study, the researchers sought permission from the office of the CTE dean, which ensured a smooth and uninterrupted final data collection. Next, the researchers appropriately asked the CTE students to participate as respondents in this study. Once the respondents agreed, the researchers explained the purpose of the study and the methodologies employed before distributing the questionnaires.

The data gathering procedure was conducted in two phases: quantitative and qualitative data collection. In the quantitative phase, the researchers distributed survey questionnaires to selected CTE students during their free time on school premises. For the qualitative data collection, the researchers employed Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-depth Interviews (IDI), addressing open-ended questions in a planned session. For the focus group

discussion, the researchers selected eight students from the CTE population to ensure diverse responses based on their experiences with classmates who have disabilities. Similarly, the researchers chose seven CTE students for the in-depth interviews and conducted one-on-one sessions to gather detailed responses and observations. The researchers maintained the confidentiality of the respondents' answers throughout the data-gathering process. After collecting the responses, the researchers securely stored the data. The distribution and printing of survey questionnaires were ongoing, and they were provided to respondents during their free time on the school premises.

Once the data was ready for interpretation, it was analyzed and evaluated through the specified range of methods of this research and its interpretation. With the results, perceptions from the students were noted and acknowledged without altering personal comments from the researchers. Moreover, the researchers utilized Cronbach's alpha for the reliability test, while mean, standard deviation, and the Kruskal-Wallis Test were used to identify the findings from the quantitative responses. Meanwhile, the qualitative responses that were collected were analyzed based on the themes of this research.

In the study, the researchers upheld high standards of accountability and confidentiality in handling the gathered data. This also encompasses how the data is stored and analyzed, which safeguards the privacy of the respondents and ensures anonymity. The researchers were transparent about obtaining the respondents' consent, explaining how their data would be utilized throughout the research process and confirming that personal information would be securely protected. Furthermore, the researchers complied with all legal and regulatory requirements to ensure that all respondents' responses remained confidential and were used exclusively for research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the primary objective of the quantitative part is to identify the perceived barriers to learning among selected students in CTE, focusing on School Context and Predominant Attitude, Availability of Resources, and Educational Response. With this, the researchers can infer the students' level of perception regarding inclusive education through the study's qualitative descriptions and their interpretations. Furthermore, this study also aims to explore the significant differences between the program and year level of students concerning their barriers to learning in inclusive education.

Barriers to Students' Learning in Inclusive Education

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation of the indicators that elevate the level of students' perception in inclusive education. Moreover, this table displays the overall results gathered from the data and the supported findings from other related studies.

The data revealed that the overall mean is 4.27 (SD =

Table 1: Barriers to Students’ Learning in Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	SD	Quantitative Description
School Context and Predominant Attitude	4.30	.44	Very High
Availability of Resources	4.21	.48	Very High
Educational Response	4.29	.48	Very High
Overall	4.27	.42	Very High

0.42), indicating a very high level of perception of barriers to student learning among CTE students. This means that students are encountering extensive and persistent barriers that significantly hinder their participation, engagement, and overall academic success in an inclusive learning environment.

Additionally, the indicator with the highest mean among all indicators is the School Context and Predominant Attitude, which has a mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.44, indicating a very high perception among students. This suggests that students view the school environment, including the attitudes of teachers, peers, and staff toward inclusive education, as the most significant barrier. In other words, this implies that despite the presence of inclusive education policies in the learning environment, negative perceptions and a lack of understanding from the school community continue to create serious obstacles for students.

On the other hand, among the three indicators, the availability of resources received the lowest mean score of 4.21 with a standard deviation of 0.48, which, despite being the lowest, still falls within the very high interpretation range. This indicates that many students experienced

significant and ongoing barriers due to insufficient or inaccessible resources, such as learning materials, assistive tools, or accessible classroom environments. Comparing this result with the first indicator, it suggests that while students viewed the lack of resources as a considerable barrier to inclusive education, it is relatively less pressing. These findings highlight that while the availability of resources remains a critical concern, the school context and prevailing attitudes present a comparatively greater barrier to achieving inclusive education.

These findings highlight a critical need for institutions to address persistent challenges by improving continuous teacher training, specifically regarding inclusive strategies, ensuring equitable access to learning materials, and fostering a more supportive and inclusive classroom culture. Proving this, Adhikari (2023) pointed out that many teachers still lack the knowledge, tools, and disability-friendly facilities needed to support all students. Similarly, Savinova *et al.* (2024) explained that problems like poor teacher training, limited use of helpful technology, and failure to meet individual student needs continue to make inclusion difficult.

Significant Differences in Barriers to Students’ Learning
In this study, the program and year level of each student were also gathered to address the research question of the quantitative part. This aims to determine whether there is a statistical difference among programs and year levels regarding barriers to students’ learning in inclusive education.

Table 2 presents the significant differences among programs in the perception of barriers to students’ learning, primarily focusing on BSEd-Math, BEEEd, and BSNEd. This data utilized the Kruskal-Wallis test, including its mean, p-value, and the overall result, which determines the significant difference among the programs.

Table 2: Significance of Program Differences in Barriers to Students’ Learning

	BSEd-Math_Mean	BEEEd_Mean	BSNEd_Mean	Overall
Kruskal Wallis Test	49.01	51.45	56.40	0.385
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.825	0.825	0.825	0.825

The results are shown as BSEd-Math ($H = 49.01, p = 0.825$), BEEEd ($H = 51.45, p = 0.825$), BSNEd ($H = 56.40, p = 0.825$), and the overall perception of barriers ($H = 3.85, p = 0.825$). These p-values are higher than the alpha value of 0.05, indicating no significant difference in perception among students enrolled in these three programs. This implies that, regardless of the academic program, college students shared relatively similar perceptions regarding the challenges of inclusive education.

In a systematic review of Freer (2021) involving 37 studies, it revealed that while students’ attitudes toward inclusive education were influenced by personal experiences with individuals with disabilities, these attitudes did not significantly vary across academic programs. Similarly,

Alshahrani (2023) found that inclusive education fosters positive relationships between students with and without disabilities, highlighting that shared interactions and collaborative activities help bridge perceived differences. This supports the previously mentioned finding that students, regardless of their academic program, have relatively similar perceptions regarding the challenges of inclusive education.

Furthermore, Table 3 illustrates the significance of year-level differences in how students perceive barriers to learning within inclusive education, specifically focusing on the first, second, and third year levels. It employs the Kruskal-Wallis test to assess the significant differences among these year levels.

The results shown are from the first year ($H = 56.40, p =$

Table 3: Significance of Year Level Differences in Barriers to Students' Learning

	1 st Year_Mean	2 nd Year_Mean	3 rd Year_Mean	Overall
Kruskal Wallis Test	56.40	51.45	49.01	0.385
df	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	0.825	0.825	0.825	0.825

0.825), second year ($H = 51.45, p = 0.825$), third year ($H = 49.01, p = 0.825$), and overall perceptions of barriers ($H = 3.85, p = 0.825$). These p-values exceed the alpha value of 0.05, indicating no significant difference in perceptions among students enrolled in these three programs. This demonstrates no statistically significant difference in the perceived barriers to student learning regarding inclusive education when grouped by year level. The consistency in perceptions across year levels suggests that experiences and challenges related to inclusive education are not significantly affected by students' academic maturity or progression through their college years. Whether early in their academic journey or nearing graduation, students face similar barriers, reflecting systemic challenges that persist throughout their college education.

Supporting this result, a study conducted in northeastern Colombia by Carrillo-Sierra *et al.* (2025) identified key barriers such as inadequate pedagogical strategies, communication gaps, and infrastructural issues, which remained consistent regardless of students' year level, highlighting the systemic nature of these challenges.

Similarly, Griggs & Moore (2022) found that learners with diverse needs experienced comparable barriers to inclusion across various educational stages, suggesting that these problems are not unique to any specific year level.

Perception of Barriers to Student Learning in Inclusive Education

In this study, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions during the qualitative phase concerning the barriers to students' learning in the inclusive education of selected CTE students.

Table 4 presents the thematic analysis, which includes the formulated meanings derived from the participants' responses. These meanings have been categorized into their cluster themes and classified into the emergent themes related to the barriers to student learning in inclusive education. In this study, two emergent themes are established: Gaps in Adaptive Teaching Practices and Disruptions in the Learning Environment.

Table 4: Perception of Barriers to Students' Learning in Inclusive Education

Emergent Theme	Cluster Theme	Formulated Meaning
Gaps in Adaptive Teaching Practices	Insufficient Teacher Training	Some adjustments fail to adequately support our classmates. There is a significant gap in teacher training for handling special needs.
	Unrecognized Student Needs	Teachers often adjust only when they recognize a need. Support is lacking when teachers do not recognize individual learning needs. We feel overwhelmed when our needs and those of others are unbalanced.
	Limited Instructional Responsiveness	Many teachers provide the same work but only adjust the time or method. Some teachers maintain the same exams, ignoring the need for more time or support. Not all learning activities accommodate everyone's pace, leading to frustration.
	Instructional Design Limitations	Some learning materials are not inclusive, especially for those with hearing or visual needs. The student sometimes feels that the learning tools are not adequate for all their needs.
Disruptions in the Learning Environment	Instructional Continuity Issues	Behavioral issues from the student with a disability can be distracting. Sudden disruptions delay lessons and create confusion. Group activities become challenging when some classmates can't participate actively.
	Socio-Emotional Interference	We sometimes feel unsafe or anxious due to sudden behaviors. Some of us feel annoyed or impatient with unusual behaviors. Understanding is hard when behaviors are too different. It is emotionally draining to continuously adapt in an inclusive class.

Gaps in Adaptive Teaching Practices

This emergent theme indicates that teachers are not adapting their teaching methods for different types of learners in the classroom. Everyone receives the same lesson, even if some students require more support or a different approach. As a result, some students struggle or feel like they do not belong in the learning environment. Van Geel *et al.* (2023) point out that many teachers are not fully equipped to tailor their teaching for various types of learners, which often results in one-size-fits-all lessons that leave some students feeling unsupported or excluded. Associated with this theme are the cluster themes that validate it, which include Insufficient Teaching Training, Unrecognized Student Needs, Limited Instructional Responsiveness, and Instructional Design Limitations.

Insufficient Teacher Training. This refers to a situation where a teacher has not received adequate academic and professional development to actively and effectively fulfill their roles in the classroom. The challenges perceived in an inclusive classroom stem from the teacher's lack of professional development and insufficient preparation. In this regard, Capangpangan *et al.* (2024) demonstrated that many teachers feel unprepared and lack the necessary training to support students with diverse needs, highlighting how gaps in their education can hinder the creation of an inclusive learning environment. These raise concerns that teachers are ill-equipped to effectively implement inclusive strategies, which prevents students from achieving satisfactory learning outcomes, as reflected in the following participant statements: "Our professors are helping him get used to working at our pace, like finishing tasks within an hour, so he can adjust better. But sometimes, he still tends to go over the time limit."

The student highlighted that professors made intentional efforts to help the student keep up with the class by limiting activities to one hour and encouraging him to gradually adjust to the pace. However, he would often exceed the allotted time despite the support.

"His understanding of that specific disability isn't that broad. And it's really unfortunate for the child if the teacher lacks the courage, interest, or willingness to engage because honestly, if I were a regular teacher, I might think, 'This is so exhausting,' or 'Now I really have to pay special attention to this,' or 'This just adds more to my workload.'"

On the other hand, the student emphasized how a teacher's limited understanding of certain disabilities, coupled with a lack of genuine interest or motivation, can leave children with special needs feeling neglected, particularly when teaching them is perceived as an added burden rather than a shared responsibility.

Unrecognized Student Needs. This cluster highlights how some students feel their learning needs are often overlooked or not fully supported in an inclusive classroom. The unrecognized needs may lead students to internalize their struggles as personal failures when, in fact, the educational approach did not accommodate them. Additionally, the classroom typically only adapts

when problems arise, reinforcing inequality, as those with less visible needs may slip through the cracks. A systematic review of inclusive education practices by Amor *et al.* (2018) found that many educational systems still struggle to adequately identify and address the diverse learning needs of all students, particularly those with less apparent disabilities or learning difficulties, which leads to educational disparities and feelings of exclusion. These perceptions are reflected in the following participant statements:

"What usually happens is that the time has to be adjusted. Ideally, all outputs should be submitted before the class ends. But sometimes, the teacher just allows submissions later, like during lunch break. It doesn't happen all the time, though. There are also moments when she strictly says, 'Pass your papers now.'"

The student highlighted the inconsistency in time management during output submissions, noting that while outputs should ideally be submitted before class ends, there are instances when the teacher extends the deadline until lunchtime. However, there are also moments when immediate submission is strictly enforced.

"One of the first challenges is that teachers sometimes struggle to maintain balance in the classroom, especially when there's a student with special needs. For example, the student might suddenly make noise or display certain behaviors that seem unusual to us. But you can't just scold or raise your voice at them there's a proper way to approach situations like that."

The student shared that teachers often struggle to maintain balance in the classroom, especially when working with students who have special needs. It's not just about managing sudden outbursts or unexpected behaviors; it's also about knowing how to respond with care and the appropriate approach rather than reacting with frustration.

"My younger sibling has a classmate with cerebral palsy, and his behavior is intense he's hyperactive and sometimes aggressive. Even when I observe, I can't fully blame him because his parents also have a different way of handling things. Right now, the school is discussing whether to shift him to modular learning, but that's not an option because he gets physically aggressive, like punching or even trying to stab with a pen. So, imagine being the teacher, and in their case, the teacher is from MAPEH how can they manage if they're not making an effort to understand the student?"

Similarly, the student demonstrated the significant challenges faced when a student with cerebral palsy displays intense and sometimes aggressive behavior. This experience underscored the vital roles of both teachers and parents, emphasizing that understanding and effort from the teacher are crucial, particularly when conventional classroom strategies prove inadequate.

Limited Instructional Responsiveness. This cluster addresses the tendency of some educators to provide uniform tasks to all students, making minimal adjustments beyond extended time or alternative delivery

methods. While these efforts demonstrate some level of accommodation, they often fall short of addressing the diverse learning styles and needs present in inclusive classrooms. A study reveals that teachers, despite having basic training, often struggle to create personalized learning plans and fully meet the diverse needs of their students, reflecting the concept of limited instructional responsiveness making only basic adjustments rather than genuinely adapting to the variety of learning styles in inclusive classrooms (Mabanag *et al.*, 2024). This makes it more challenging for some students to keep up or feel included in the lessons, as reflected in the following participant statements:

“But sometimes, the issue is that there’s another class scheduled right after, like during exams, so the teacher isn’t always able to adjust. What usually happens instead is that they just give the student a remedial session.”

“When it comes to academics, that’s where things get challenging his pacing is very different. Just answering the exam alone takes him much longer. He needs plenty of time even two hours might not be enough for him.”

Two students highlighted that teachers use other remedies to accommodate students, especially during exams, such as providing additional time or offering remedial support. “I was once grouped with him, and honestly, you can’t blame your groupmates for feeling uncomfortable, because the truth is, he wouldn’t participate at all. In the end, we’d always be the ones who had to finish the task ourselves.”

Furthermore, the student noted that they often engage in the assigned task to address the non-participation of certain students, which makes other group members uncomfortable.

Instructional Design Limitations. This cluster addresses the inadequacy and unsuitability of learning materials for students’ diverse needs. It involves the ineffectiveness of using non-differentiated learning tools in the educational environment. This emphasizes the learning materials that were inappropriate for the students’ education provided by the school. This aligns with the assertions of Jardinez & Natividad (2024) in their study; it highlights factors that challenge inclusivity, namely the lack of teacher training, the difficulty in meeting specific needs of students, such as adaptive learning materials, and inadequate learning facilities. These perspectives were reflected in the following participants’ statements:

“Some students with disabilities, like those who can’t speak and use sign language, often struggle to respond to questions given by the teacher. It’s challenging for them to communicate their answers.”

“There are times when the resources simply aren’t sufficient for them.”

The students noted that the resources provided by the school are not adequate at times for the learners in an inclusive classroom.

Disruptions in the Learning Environment

This emergent theme highlights the factors that hinder

learning flow and quality in inclusive classrooms. Teachers and students often encounter challenges such as behavioral issues, limited engagement from students with disabilities, and teaching methods that fail to address diverse needs. These disruptions not only interrupt lesson continuity but also evoke emotional responses in students, ranging from discomfort to frustration. According to Singh *et al.* (2023), challenges like limited time, lack of resources, and inadequate training for teachers in inclusive classrooms disrupt the flow of lessons, making it harder for both students and teachers to stay engaged and creating emotional strain on everyone involved. As a result, both instructional delivery and peer relationships deteriorate, compelling teachers to continuously adapt their strategies to maintain a supportive and effective learning environment, as reflected in the following participants’ statements:

Instructional Continuity Issues. This cluster refers to the challenges of maintaining instructional continuity in inclusive classrooms. Students and teachers experienced disruptions due to behavioral issues and the limited participation of students with disabilities. These situations affected the flow of lessons and required immediate adjustments to strategies. This aligns with the Mabanag *et al.* (2024) study, which asserted that while teachers claimed to be somewhat prepared for the implementation of inclusive education, challenges such as individualizing learning materials and managing behavioral problems were difficult to address, consequently disrupting the flow and continuity of lessons. These issues were reflected in the participants’ statements:

“It was really difficult as I experienced it. Students’ mood swings and tantrums were the main sources of distraction. Students from next-door classrooms would at times run into ours. Additionally, if your student displays behavioral problems, they frequently hit or pull hair while you are teaching or helping the cooperating teacher.”

The student highlighted the emotional and behavioral challenges faced in the classroom, demonstrating the difficulty of managing students who frequently experience tantrums, unpredictable mood swings, and may even exhibit aggressive behaviors like hitting or pulling hair, which is worsened by occasional disruptions caused by other students entering the room.

“It’s not that we’re specifically discriminating when it comes to groupings, but based on our classmates’ previous group experiences, I’ve found that they can’t contribute much because they don’t communicate well. That is why no one wants to be with him during activities where we are instructed to group ourselves. People tend to stay away from him.”

Similarly, another student highlighted the social dynamics in group activities, where a student who struggled to communicate was often unintentionally excluded, as peers tended to avoid collaborating with them due to their limited participation.

Socio-Emotional Interference. This cluster refers to the emotional challenges that students face when interacting

with classmates who have disabilities. Feelings of discomfort, fear, or frustration may arise due to sudden or unfamiliar behaviors. This result was supported by McGowan (2020), who found that university students reported experiencing “empathic fatigue” when consistently engaging with peers with diverse behavioral needs, noting the emotional toll of sustained adaptation efforts in inclusive educational settings. Additionally, Kart and Kart (2021) found that students without disabilities often experience discomfort and uncertainty when interacting with peers who have special needs. These feelings typically intensify during collaborative activities when students have not developed natural relationships beforehand, creating barriers to meaningful engagement. These were reflected in the following participants’ statements:

“There were times when students from other classrooms would suddenly come into ours, causing distractions. And during teaching, observation, or when assisting my Cooperating Teacher, I noticed that students with behavioral challenges would often act out by hitting others or pulling their hair.”

“During the exam, I ended up sitting next to the same student again, and it was quite challenging. They were being noisy, which made it hard for me to concentrate I often felt distracted and a bit overwhelmed.”

Both students indicated that some students from other classrooms often enter their classroom. While assisting or observing the CT, students with behavioral issues tend to act out by hitting or pulling hair. The student also noted that sitting next to a noisy student during exams can be quite distracting at times.

Corroboration of the Findings in Barriers to Students’ Learning

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were integrated to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of barriers experienced by students in inclusive education. By merging the data, the study was able to highlight recurring issues such as negative attitudes within school environment, insufficient learning resources, and a lack of adaptive teaching practices. This corroboration provided a clearer and more holistic view of the challenges faced by students, reinforcing the need for more inclusive, supportive, and responsive educational practices.

The Table 5 below illustrates how the statistical findings and the thematic content analysis support and enhances each other in identifying the main obstacles to achieving truly inclusive education. Furthermore, this table provides a clearer vision of the daily experience of students in inclusive classrooms and concerns need to be addressed.

Table 5: Convergence of the Findings in Barriers to Students’ Learning

Indicator	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Nature of Data Integration
School Context and Predominant Attitude	The mean is 4.30, which means students strongly feel that negative attitudes in school, whether from peers or teachers, are a big challenge to inclusive learning.	The students shared real-life experiences of feeling left out or judged. Some teachers seemed uninterested or lacked the willingness to engage students with special needs.	Merging Confirmation
Availability of Resources	The mean score is 4.21, which shows that many students believe there’s a serious lack of tools, learning materials, and support systems needed to meet diverse needs.	Students talked about the absence of assistive devices, physical barriers in classrooms, and not enough trained staff to help learners with disabilities.	Merging Confirmation
Educational Response	The mean score is 4.29, which means students perceive that lessons and activities are often not adapted to include everyone, especially those with special needs.	Many students noticed that teachers often don’t adjust their teaching strategies or simply lack training to handle diverse learning needs.	Merging Confirmation

Based on the results, students feel that the school environment and people’s attitudes are the biggest challenges to inclusive education, with a mean score of 4.30. This indicates that most strongly agree that the behavior of teachers, classmates, and the entire school community significantly influences the success of inclusion. In interviews, some students expressed feelings of exclusion and noted that a few teachers seemed unmotivated or unwilling to make adjustments for

classmates with special needs. These responses highlight the importance of fostering a school environment that is welcoming, understanding, and accepting. This aligns with the findings of Cerbo & Rabi (2019), which indicate that students with disabilities were misinterpreted due to the reactions they displayed to their peers. This misinterpretation caused non-disabled students to struggle with how to approach and interact with them in the classroom.

With a mean score of 4.21, students also indicated that a lack of resources is a significant barrier. They mentioned in both the surveys and interviews that many classrooms lack essential items such as assistive tools, proper infrastructure, and trained support teachers needed to effectively help students with diverse needs. Insufficient materials or support not only make learning more difficult, but also impact students' self-esteem and their ability to keep pace. These observations align with the findings of Adhikari (2023), which highlight major obstacles to educational inclusivity, including insufficient knowledge for teachers, a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure, and inadequate materials.

The education responses reflect a mean score of 4.29, indicating that many students feel the way teachers instruct isn't inclusive enough. Numerous students mentioned that their teachers still rely on one-size-fits-all methods that don't work for everyone, particularly those with learning differences or disabilities. During the interviews, students noted that teachers often fail to adjust their teaching styles or provide alternative learning methods. This highlights a clear need for enhanced training and support for teachers, ensuring they are prepared to implement inclusive teaching strategies in everyday classroom scenarios, not just in theory. This aligns with the study of Gonzaga *et al.* (2024), which emphasizes the challenges of implementing inclusive education. These challenges include a lack of essential resources, such as appropriate learning materials and specialized teachers, and significant improvements are necessary to address these obstacles, including trained personnel, adapted facilities, and learning aids.

In general, students strongly perceived that inclusive education still faces significant hurdles. With an overall mean of 4.27, indicating a very high level, it is clear that many encounter challenges related to the three indicators of this study that do not meet everyone's needs. Both the survey and supporting studies demonstrate that these are common, real issues affecting many learners. Numerous studies, such as Rajashekar (2021), Adhikari (2023), and Savinova *et al.* (2024), highlight similar problems rigid curricula, bullying, insufficiently trained staff, and a lack of accessible tools. Furthermore, theories such as Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasize that creating truly inclusive schools involves more than just physical changes. It requires shifting mindsets, enhancing teacher support, and fostering environments where every student feels respected and included.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that CTE students perceived significant barriers to inclusive education, with the primary concern being the school context and predominant attitude, closely followed by educational responses and the availability of resources. These concerns were strongly reflected in student interviews, which highlighted two major themes: Gaps in Adaptive Teaching Practices where teachers often lacked training, failed to fully recognize individual

student needs, and relied on one-size-fits-all approaches and Disruptions in the Learning Environment, which included behavioral challenges and emotional strain that made learning more difficult for all students. Students across various year levels and programs shared similar perceptions, indicating that these challenges are not isolated but part of a broader, system-wide issue. Drawing on Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory, which emphasizes the power of social interaction and learning through shared experiences, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which demonstrates how a student's environment plays a crucial role in their development, it is clear that inclusive education goes beyond merely having policies or accessible classrooms. Genuine inclusion means rethinking how we teach, how we support students, and how we cultivate a learning environment where everyone truly feels accepted, supported, and able to thrive.

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