Inclusive education models among developed and developing countries, and the Philippines: A comparative systematic literature review.

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Abstract

Inclusive education has become a central principle in global education policy, emphasizing equitable access and the right of all learners, particularly marginalized groups, to participate fully in school. This study conducts a Comparative Systematic Literature Review (CSLR) to examine inclusive education models across developed and developing countries, with a specific focus on the Philippines. The study followed PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure transparency and rigor. Peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and empirical studies were systematically searched, screened, and analyzed. Inclusion and exclusion criteria refined the selection, while thematic coding identified patterns across domains. Results show that students with disabilities remain the primary focus of inclusive education worldwide. However, developed countries broaden this scope by addressing socio-economic disadvantage, cultural and linguistic diversity, mental health, and giftedness. The Philippines and comparable developing nations primarily concentrate on disability inclusion, often overlooking other marginalized groups such as indigenous peoples, advanced learners, and LGBTQIA+ students. Strategies also differ: developed systems employ interconnected methods including differentiated instruction, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), teacher professional development, social-emotional learning, and equitable resourcing. In contrast, the Philippines relies on fragmented approaches, often hindered by insufficient infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and limited policy enforcement. Barriers across contexts include teacher readiness, resource inequity, persistent stigma, and systemic inefficiencies, though their intensity varies with economic and cultural conditions. Inclusive education is not a uniform concept but is shaped by local resources, institutional capacity, and cultural values. Developed countries demonstrate systemic, hybrid approaches, while developing contexts, including the Philippines, face persistent implementation gaps.

Points of Interest

- The review reveals major differences in inclusive education models, with developed countries adopting systemic frameworks while developing countries—including the Philippines—rely on fragmented, resource-dependent approaches.
- Students with disabilities remain the primary focus globally, but developed nations extend inclusion to socio-economic disadvantage, linguistic diversity, mental health, and giftedness—areas often overlooked in the Philippines.

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- Effective inclusion emerges from interconnected strategies whereas developing contexts typically use isolated, less coordinated practices.
- Common barriers such as teacher readiness, resource inequity, and stigma persist across countries, but challenges are more severe in developing contexts, highlighting the need for systemic reforms in the Philippines.

Keywords: Developed and Developing Countries; Inclusive Education; Marginalized Learners; Systematic Literature Review.

Introduction

Inclusive education is a progressive approach aiming to provide equitable access to quality education for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities (Qureshi et al., 2020; Opertti et al., 2014; Shaeffer, 2019; Artiles & Dyson, 2005). The concept, rooted in human rights, emphasizes the importance of recognizing diversity in education and ensuring marginalized groups, particularly those with disabilities, receive adequate support and resources (Gordon, 2013). This systematic literature review investigates inclusive education models across developed and developing countries, focusing on the Philippines, to elucidate the different frameworks and strategies employed globally. Research indicates that various nations adopt distinct pathways to inclusive education, shaped by cultural, social, and economic factors, highlighting a global movement toward recognizing the rights of all children to participate in school (Forlin et al., 2019).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), particularly Goal 4, emphasize the necessity of inclusive and equitable quality education for all. The UN's commitment to promoting lifelong learning opportunities for everyone directly relates to the principles of inclusive education, echoing the call for educational responsiveness to those who have been historically marginalized (UNESCO, 2019). Comprehensive, inclusive education policies contribute to achieving these goals by providing equitable access to education and fostering inclusive communities. However, despite advancements in policy discourse at the international level, significant disparities persist in the implementation of inclusive education across various contexts, particularly between developed and developing nations (Hayes & Bulat, 2017; Jiménez & Navarro, 2017).

Research has identified various gaps in the existing literature on inclusive education. Many studies focus predominantly on either developed countries or developing countries in isolation, often neglecting to provide a comparative analysis of the two contexts (Gray et al., 2017; Zaborniak-Sobczak, 2022). Furthermore, while some research offers insight into specific disabilities and marginalized groups within the educational frameworks, comprehensive examinations of the unique strategies for addressing these needs are often scarce. This highlights a gap in understanding how different countries, particularly the Philippines as a developing nation, implement inclusive education frameworks (Miguel, 2017; Sito, 2020).

In both international and local contexts, the relevance of this study cannot be overstated. For policymakers and educators worldwide, this review will provide a wealth of information about inclusive education models that prioritize the rights and needs of marginalized groups. Understanding how various countries approach inclusive education can foster collaboration and exchange of best practices across borders (Labrague, 2018; Paguirigan, 2020). Locally, in the Philippines, the insights generated from this systematic literature review are particularly crucial for enhancing the existing frameworks and policies on inclusive education. The

country's unique challenges in implementing inclusive education require tailored strategies that consider socio-economic factors, cultural contexts, and institutional capacities.

Furthermore, as the educational landscape continues to evolve, the present study aims to provide a critical consideration of the challenges and barriers faced by developing countries, including the Philippines. It will scrutinize existing literature for obstacles to inclusive education, drawing comparisons to developed nations where structural support might be more robust. Notably, understanding unique challenges—such as inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and societal attitudes toward disability—is essential for creating actionable solutions (Alcosero et al., 2023; Baguisa & Ang-Manaig, 2019). Thus, this comparative analysis promises to bridge existing gaps in research while shedding light on practical implications for enhancing inclusive practices in education worldwide.

By consolidating various studies and perspectives, this systematic literature review aims not only to advance academic knowledge but also to catalyze critical conversations on improving educational policy and practice, ensuring that the rights of all learners are upheld and that inclusive education becomes a standard rather than an exception. This work, therefore, emerges as a vital contribution to the field of education, positioned within the intersections of policy, practice, and social justice, ultimately striving to create a more inclusive society for everyone.

Research Questions

The present study conducted a Comparative Systematic Literature Review of Inclusive Education Models among developed and developing countries, as well as the Philippines. Specifically, it answered the following questions:
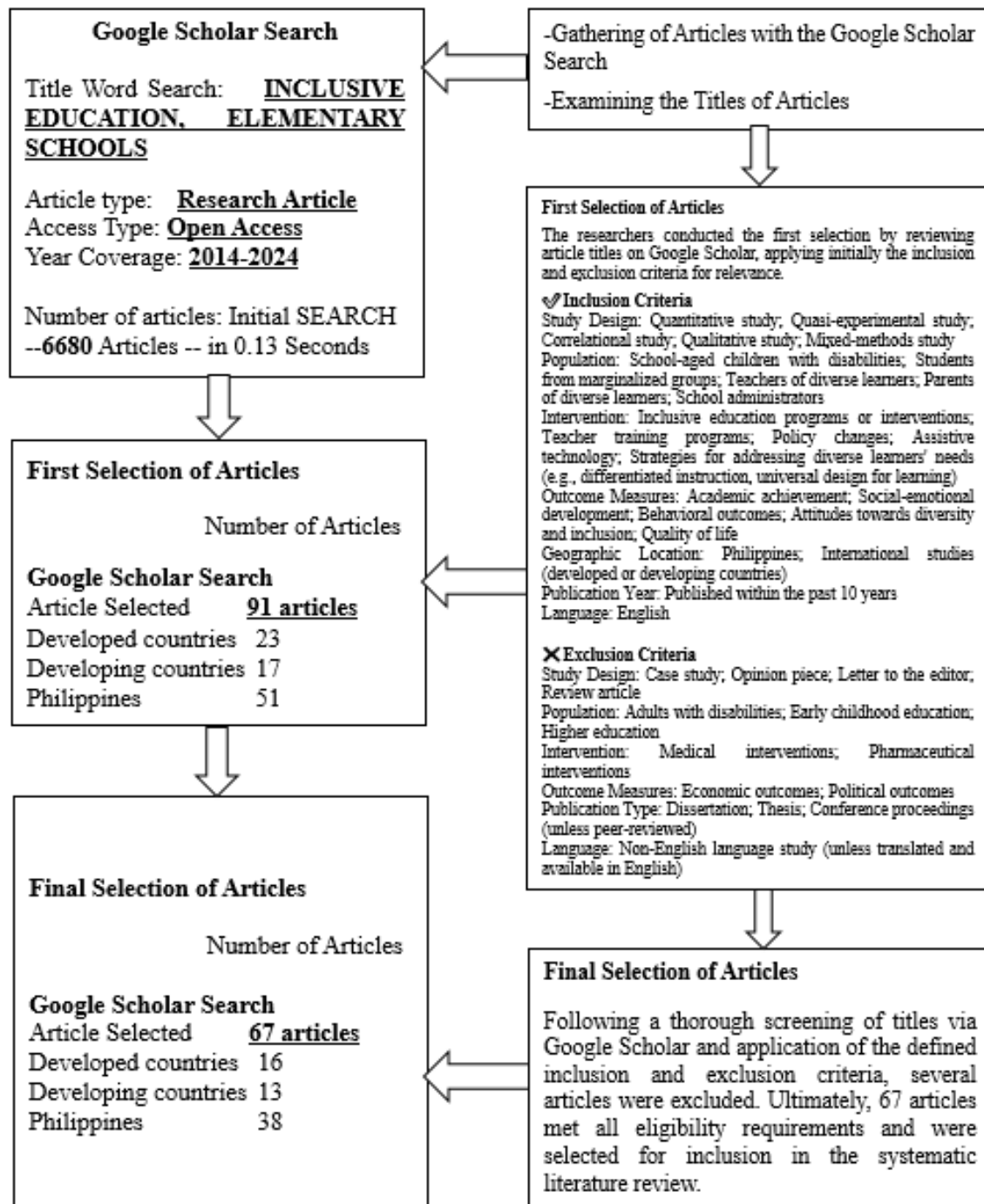
1. What are the inclusive education models in developed and developing countries, including the Philippines, with their primary social groups prioritized?
2. What are the specific types of disabilities, exceptionalities, and marginalized groups in inclusive education among developed and developing countries, as well as the Philippines?
3. What are the Strategies for Addressing Unique Needs in Inclusive Education in Developed and Developing Countries and the Philippines?
4. What are the challenges and barriers hindering the implementation of inclusive education in developed and developing countries, including the Philippines?

Methods

This study adopted a Comparative Systematic Literature Review (CSLR) approach, structured around the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. The CSLR compared inclusive education models across developed countries, developing countries, and the Philippines to identify similarities and differences in prioritized groups, strategies, disabilities addressed, and implementation barriers. The methodology included a systematic search, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, thematic coding, and bias assessment across five domains. This approach ensured comparability and transparency in synthesizing inclusive education practices across diverse socio-economic contexts.

Figure 1. Steps in taking the articles for Systematic Literature Review

Google Scholar Search

Title Word Search: **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION, ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Article type: **Research Article**
Access Type: **Open Access**
Year Coverage: **2014-2024**

Number of articles: Initial SEARCH --**6680** Articles -- in 0.13 Seconds

First Selection of Articles

Number of Articles

Google Scholar Search
Article Selected   **91 articles**
Developed countries   23
Developing countries 17
Philippines   51

Final Selection of Articles

Number of Articles

Google Scholar Search
Article Selected   **67 articles**
Developed countries   16
Developing countries 13
Philippines   38

-Gathering of Articles with the Google Scholar Search

-Examining the Titles of Articles

First Selection of Articles
The researchers conducted the first selection by reviewing article titles on Google Scholar, applying initially the inclusion and exclusion criteria for relevance.

✔**Inclusion Criteria**
Study Design: Quantitative study; Quasi-experimental study; Correlational study; Qualitative study; Mixed-methods study
Population: School-aged children with disabilities; Students from marginalized groups; Teachers of diverse learners; Parents of diverse learners; School administrators
Intervention: Inclusive education programs or interventions; Teacher training programs; Policy changes; Assistive technology; Strategies for addressing diverse learners' needs (e.g., differentiated instruction, universal design for learning)
Outcome Measures: Academic achievement; Social-emotional development; Behavioral outcomes; Attitudes towards diversity and inclusion; Quality of life
Geographic Location: Philippines; International studies (developed or developing countries)
Publication Year: Published within the past 10 years
Language: English

✘**Exclusion Criteria**
Study Design: Case study; Opinion piece; Letter to the editor; Review article
Population: Adults with disabilities; Early childhood education; Higher education
Intervention: Medical interventions; Pharmaceutical interventions
Outcome Measures: Economic outcomes; Political outcomes
Publication Type: Dissertation; Thesis; Conference proceedings (unless peer-reviewed)
Language: Non-English language study (unless translated and available in English)

Final Selection of Articles

Following a thorough screening of titles via Google Scholar and application of the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, several articles were excluded. Ultimately, 67 articles met all eligibility requirements and were selected for inclusion in the systematic literature review.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search process began by defining the scope through the four research questions, which guided the keywords and inclusion criteria. Searches were conducted primarily through Google Scholar, covering publications between 2014 and 2024. The terms "inclusive education," "elementary schools," "developed countries," "developing countries," and "Philippines" were combined to maximize relevant results. The initial search yielded 6,680 articles. A first screening based on titles and abstracts reduced this to 91 studies: 23 from developed countries, 17 from developing countries, and 51 from the Philippines. Eligibility criteria were then applied, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles, quantitative, qualitative, quasi-experimental, or mixed-method designs. Excluded were case studies, opinion pieces, non-English publications, dissertations, and conference proceedings. The final dataset consisted of 67 full-text articles: 16 from developed countries, 13 from developing countries, and 38 from the Philippines (Fig. 1).

To ensure objectivity, an independent reviewer with a background in inclusive education research was engaged. Reviewers underwent a preparatory session on applying the Cochrane Risk of Bias Tool, adapted for education studies, to ensure consistent evaluation across studies. Each article was independently assessed against five bias domains, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Country classification followed the World Population Review (2024) and Pew Research Center (2024), distinguishing developed nations such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Japan, Australia, and Israel, from developing countries including the Philippines, India, Indonesia, and Brazil. This allowed systematic comparison of inclusive education practices across varied socio-economic contexts, situating the Philippines within a global framework.

This structured protocol ensured that only methodologically sound and contextually relevant studies were included, in line with best practices in CSLR (Khalid et al., 2020) to enhance analytical robustness and validity of conclusions (Floranza, 2024).

Bias Risk Assessment Framework

A central feature of this CSLR was the assessment of methodological quality and bias risk. An adapted Cochrane Collaboration's Risk of Bias Tool (RoB, education-specific) was applied across five domains: 1. Selection bias and confounding – adequacy of sampling strategies, randomization, and representativeness; 2. Performance bias – consistency in intervention delivery or implementation of inclusive models; 3. Detection bias – objectivity and reliability of outcome assessment tools; 4. Attrition bias – completeness of data, including participant retention and dropout reporting; 5. Reporting bias – comprehensiveness and balance in presenting findings, including null or negative results (Nejadghaderi et al., 2024)

Each study was rated on a three-point scale: Low risk of bias (✓) – The study explicitly documented rigorous design features (e.g., randomized sampling, standardized intervention protocols, validated measurement tools, transparent reporting); Moderate/unclear risk of bias (○) – The study exhibited partial compliance (e.g., purposive or convenience sampling with justification, incomplete description of intervention protocols, ambiguous reporting of attrition); High risk of bias (✗) – The study failed to address core methodological safeguards (e.g., non-transparent sampling, inconsistent intervention delivery, unvalidated or subjective measures, selective reporting of outcomes). (Kumar, 2023).

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compliance (e.g., purposive or convenience sampling with justification, incomplete description of intervention protocols, ambiguous reporting of attrition); High risk of bias (X) – The study failed to address core methodological safeguards (e.g., non-transparent sampling, inconsistent intervention delivery, unvalidated or subjective measures, selective reporting of outcomes). (Kumar, 2023).

This scoring system allowed for consistent comparative analysis and was supported by a structured quality appraisal matrix (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Risk Bias (Developed and Developing Countries)

Item No.	COUNTRY	SOURCES/ARTICLES	Selection Bias and confounding	Performance Bias	Detection Bias	Attrition Bias	Reporting Bias
	DEVELOPED COUNTRIES						
1	USA	Tahir, K., Doelger, B., & Hynes, M. (2019).	⊘	⊠	⊘	☑	⊘
2	Canada	Gray, C., Wilcox, G., & Nordstokke, D. (2017).	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊠	⊘
3	Canada	Loreman, T. (2014).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
4	Germany	Saloviita, T. (2020).	⊘	⊘	☑	☑	⊘
5	Czech Republic	Smyth, F., Shevlin, M., Buchner, T., Biewer, G., Flynn, P., Latimier, C., ... & Ferreira, M. A. (2014).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
6	Czech Republic	Stepaniuk, I. (2019).	⊘	⊘	☑	⊘	☑
7	Poland	Zaborniak-Sobczak, M. (2022).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
8	Poland	Yevtuch, M., Shevtsiv, Z., Filonenko, M., Pelekh, Y., Muszkieta, R., & Zukow, W. (2020).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
9	Australia	Corbett, J., & Slee, R. (2016).	⊘	⊘	☑	⊠	⊘
10	Australia	Hardy, I., & Woodcock, S. (2015)	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
11	New Zealand	Mitchell, D., & Sutherland, D. (2020).	⊘	☑	☑	⊠	⊘
12	New Zealand	Mitchell, D. (2015).	⊘	☑	☑	⊠	⊘
13	Japan	Yada, A., & Savolainen, H. (2017).	⊘	☑	☑	⊠	⊘
14	Japan	Kang, S. W. (2014).	⊘	☑	☑	⊠	⊘
15	Israel	Vizer-Karni, N., & Reiter, S. (2014).	⊘	☑	☑	⊠	⊘
16	Israel	Crispel, O., & Kasperski, R. (2021).	⊘	☑	☑	⊠	⊘
	DEVELOPING COUNTRIES						
1	African Countries	Pather, S. (2019).	⊘	☑	☑	☑	☑
2	India	Tiwari, A., Das, A., & Sharma, M. (2015).	⊘	☑	☑	☑	⊘
3	Indonesia	Efendi, M. (2018).	⊘	⊘	☑	⊠	⊘
4	Indonesia	Siron, Y., & Mulyono, R. (2017)	⊘	⊘	☑	⊠	⊘
5	Bangladesh	Ahmmed, M., Sharma, U., & Deppeler, J. (2014).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
6	Vietnam	Srivastava, M., De Boer, A., & Pijl, S. J. (2015).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
7	Vietnam	Mizunoya, S., Mitra, S., & Yamasaki, I. (2016).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
8	Thailand	Vorapanya, S., & Dunlap, D. (2014).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
9	Thailand	Dapudong, R. C. (2014).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
10	Brazil	Hayes, A. M., & Bulat, J. (2017).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
11	Colombia	Jiménez, V. T. B., & Navarro, I. C. G. (2017)	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
12	Chile	Villarreal, E. T., & Villouta, E. V. (2024)	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
13	Peru	Agüero, J. M., Galarza, F., & Yamada, G. (2020).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘

Legend: ☑ low-risk of bias (1)　　⊘ moderate risk/unclear risk of bias (2)　　⊠ high risk of bias

Table 2. Risk Bias (Philippines).

Item No.	COUNTRY	SOURCES/ARTICLES	Selection Bias and confounding	Performance Bias	Detection Bias	Attrition Bias	Reporting Bias
1	Philippines	Muega, M. A. G. (2016).	⊘	⊘	⊘	☑	⊘
2	Philippines	Paguirigan, E. (2020).	⊘	☒	☑	☒	⊘
3	Philippines	Cucio, M. R. R., & Roldan, M. D. G. Z. (2020).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	☑
4	Philippines	Baguisa, L. R., & Ang-Manaig, K. (2019)	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
5	Philippines	Ecoben, M. E. (2019)	⊘	⊘	☑	☒	⊘
6	Philippines	Rosales, E., & Rosales, S. (2019).	☑	⊘	⊘	☒	⊘
7	Philippines	Alcosero, A., Carcueva, H., Abasolo, M. C., Arranchado, W. M., & Cabanilla Jr, A. (2023)	⊘	☒	☒	☒	⊘
8	Philippines	Labrague, C. B. (2018).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
9	Philippines	Lapeña, G., Balamad, M. S., Dano, C., Villanueva, J., Padillo, A., & Simogan, M. J. A. (2023).	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘	⊘
10	Philippines	Javier, M. (2023).	☑	⊘	☑	☒	☑
11	Philippines	Manos, M. J. B. (2024).	⊘	☒	☒	☒	⊘
12	Philippines	Cuizon, J. L. (2024).	☑	⊘	⊘	☒	⊘
13	Philippines	Sito, L. R. (2020).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
14	Philippines	Cantos, L. L., & Celindro, N. C. (2021)	⊘	☒	☒	☒	☒
15	Philippines	Shaeffer, S. (2019).	⊘	⊘	⊘	☒	⊘
16	Philippines	Medina, S., Pi, A. I., Anne Ammad, P., Taasin, N. A., Tauto-an, M. R., Del Castillo, M. G., & Laguna, E. (2022).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
17	Philippines	Sales, R. K. B. (2019).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
18	Philippines	Formoso, D. B. (2019).	⊘	⊘	☑	☒	⊘
19	Philippines	Forlin, C., Scorgie, K., Strikwerda, H., Walker, J., Donnelly, M., Jane, S., & Aragon, A. B. (2019).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
20	Philippines	Sagun-Ongtangco, K. S., Medallon, K. G., & Tan, A. J. (2021).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
21	Philippines	Rico, D. (2019).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
22	Philippines	Casinto, C. D. (2022).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
23	Philippines	Capangpangan, S., Tango-an, J., & Lumapas, R. (2024).	⊘	⊘	☑	☒	⊘
24	Philippines	Zerrudo, A. P. (2022).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
25	Philippines	Comia, B. (2021).	☑	⊘	☑	☒	☑
26	Philippines	MADARANG, H., & MARTIN, M. (2022).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
27	Philippines	Masongsong, J., Lopres, J., Aguirre, M., Lopres, G., Enriquez, D., Bautista, F., ... & Virtusio, J. (2023).	☑	⊘	⊘	☒	⊘
28	Philippines	Omoso, R. A., & Villarente, S. V. D. (2024).	☑	⊘	⊘	☑	☑
29	Philippines	Miguel, D. M. (2017).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
30	Philippines	Panoy, B. R. (2024)	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
31	Philippines	Sanchez, S. R., Chua, L., & Melgar, R. B. (2021).	⊘	⊘	☑	☒	⊘
32	Philippines	Limson, E. B. E., RGC, M. G. M., & del Rosario, K. (2022).	⊘	⊘	⊘	☑	⊘
33	Philippines	Magtuba, C. G., & Caballero, C. G. (2024)	⊘	⊘	☑	☒	⊘
34	Philippines	Raguindin, P. Z. J., Custodio, Z. U., & Bulusan, F. (2021)	⊘	☑	⊘	☒	⊘
35	Philippines	Jugan, M. B., Reyes, N. R. T. D., Pepito Jr, J. C., Capuno, R. G., Pinili, L. C., Cabigon, A. F. P., ... & Mamites, I. O. (2024).	⊘	☑	⊘	☒	⊘
36	Philippines	Dapudong, R. C. (2014).	⊘	☒	⊘	☒	⊘
37	Philippines	Basister, M. P., & Valenzuela, M. L. S. (2021).	⊘	☑	⊘	☑	⊘
38	Philippines	Opeña, M. V., & Pontillas, P. V (2024)	☑	⊘	⊘	☒	⊘

Legend: ☑ low-risk of bias (1)   ⊘ moderate risk/unclear risk of bias (2)   ☒ high risk of bias

When comparing this with studies from developed countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Australia, and Japan, the risk of bias appears generally more favorable. The majority of these studies—such as, Gray et al. (2017), and Yada and Savolainen (2017)—were rated "low risk," particularly in performance, detection, and attrition bias. These findings suggest that inclusive education research in developed contexts benefits from more structured research environments, better institutional support, and more rigorous peer-review processes. However, "moderate/unclear risk" in the selection and reporting bias was still prevalent, indicating that even in high-income countries, specific methodological gaps persist—possibly related to constraints in fully randomizing educational interventions and limitations in reporting complex educational phenomena.

Interestingly, the studies from developing European countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic reflected patterns similar to the Philippines, though slightly more favorable. Many of these, including those by Smyth et al. (2014) and Zaborniak-Sobczak (2022), displayed "low risk" in attrition and detection bias, indicating robust follow-up practices and clearer outcome assessments. Nonetheless, moderate or unclear risks in selection and reporting were still present, pointing to shared challenges in generalizing findings and presenting comprehensive data narratives.

The risk of bias analysis for the studies reviewed in this Comparative Systematic Literature Review reveals notable trends across inclusive education research in the Philippines, as well as in developed and developing countries. Among the 38 Philippine-based studies examined, a consistent pattern of "moderate/unclear risk" was observed across all five domains of bias: selection bias, performance bias, detection bias, attrition bias, and reporting bias. This suggests a general lack of clarity in methodology and reporting, which may be attributed to insufficient disclosure of randomization procedures, participant selection, blinding mechanisms, and follow-up strategies. Notably, performance and attrition biases were frequently rated as "high risk," indicating significant challenges in ensuring consistent implementation of interventions and retention of participants. Studies such as those by Paguirigan (2020), Cucio and Roldan (2020), and Baguisa and Ang-Manaig (2019) exemplify this trend, highlighting the operational limitations in Philippine inclusive education research, particularly in the context of real-world educational settings where ideal research conditions are challenging to achieve.

In contrast, a smaller subset of Philippine studies demonstrated relatively lower risks of bias, suggesting a gradual improvement in methodological rigor in recent years. For instance, Javier (2023), Cuizon (2024), and Comia (2021) were rated "low risk" in several categories, such as selection, detection, and reporting biases. This improvement can be attributed to enhanced research training, increased awareness of evidence-based practices, and access to international standards for educational research design. Nevertheless, these studies were exceptions, and the overall moderate to high-risk profile of most Philippine studies suggests the need for capacity-building initiatives, better training in research methodologies, and stricter adherence to reporting guidelines to improve the credibility and reliability of inclusive education research in the country.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the PRISMA 2020 framework to address the four research questions through thematic and frequency-based synthesis. Articles from developed, developing, and Philippine contexts were systematically coded to extract information on inclusive education models, targeted populations, disabilities addressed, strategies for meeting unique needs, and barriers to implementation. A thematic coding system was applied to classify recurring concepts, which were then quantified by frequency and percentage to enable comparison across the three contexts (Rethlefsen & Page, 2022). Getting the percentage, raw data were computed by tallying the number of studies per category: 38 from the Philippines, 16 from developed

countries, and 13 from developing countries. Percentages were then calculated separately within each group by dividing the frequency of a theme by the total studies in that category and multiplying by 100, ensuring context-specific comparisons.

Research Ethics

This review adhered to ethical research practices even in the absence of direct human participation. All sources were accurately cited to uphold academic integrity and avoid plagiarism (Zhaksylyk et al., 2023; Abbasi et al., 2020; Guraya & Guraya, 2017). Beyond attribution, ethical rigor was ensured by critically appraising each study's methodology and contextual setting, which reduced the risk of drawing misleading generalizations across developed, developing, and Philippine contexts. To strengthen the logical link between evidence and conclusions, data were cross-checked, coded systematically, and compared only within clearly defined categories of models, strategies, and barriers. This process minimized selective reporting and supported balanced interpretation. In line with PRISMA 2020 standards (Shaheen et al., 2023; Burkhart et al., 2023), transparency in search, inclusion, and analysis protocols guaranteed both reproducibility and trustworthy conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the comparative systematic literature review on inclusive education models across developed and developing countries, including the Philippines. Guided by four research questions, the analysis explores inclusive education models, prioritized social groups, types of disabilities and marginalized populations, strategies for inclusion, and implementation challenges. The review synthesizes global and local perspectives to highlight both commonalities and contextual differences, offering insights into how inclusive education is adapted and practiced across diverse settings. Findings are discussed thematically, supported by relevant literature and comparative evidence.

The data in Figure 2 reflect not only descriptive frequencies of inclusive education models but also a conceptual shift across contexts. In developed countries, inclusion is increasingly framed as a systemic and anticipatory approach, where proactive frameworks such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Priyadharsini & Mary 2024), Co-Teaching, and Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) dominate. This contrasts with developing countries, such as the Philippines, where inclusion is largely understood in terms of access, integration, and community-based interventions rather than systemic redesign. The findings from studies reviewed (Muega, 2016; Paguirigan, 2020; Cucio & Roldan, 2020; Shaeffer, 2019) confirm that the Philippine model, though policy-driven, remains grounded in integrationist practices that prioritize enrollment and access over pedagogical reform. This conceptual shift is justified by the data in Figure 2, which shows that UDL is at 75% in developed countries, but only 30.77% in developing countries, and 2.63% in the Philippines. In short, developed systems embed inclusion in curricular design, while developing contexts—including the Philippines—continue to adopt supplementary or compensatory models to meet the immediate needs of marginalized groups.

Figure 2. Inclusive Education Models.

Inclusive Education Model	Main Prioritized Groups	Frequency			Percentage		
		Developed Countries	Developing Countries	Philippines	Developed Countries (N=16)	Developing Countries (N=13)	Philippines (N=38)
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Students with disabilities, diverse learners	12	4	1	75.00	30.77	2.63
Resource Room Model	Students needing partial mainstreaming	8	6	3	50.00	46.15	7.89
Co-Teaching Model	Students with special needs, learning disabilities	10	3	2	62.50	23.08	5.26
Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS)	Students with behavioral/emotional difficulties,	9	2	1	56.25	15.38	2.63
Inclusive Mainstreaming	Students with mild disabilities, learners from low-income	7	11	5	43.75	84.62	13.16
Special Needs Integration	Students with cognitive and physical impairments	3	9	4	18.75	69.23	10.53
Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR)	Rural learners, indigenous peoples, students with disabilities	0	8	3	0.00	61.54	7.89
Itinerant Teacher Model	Isolated learners, mobile communities	5	3	2	31.25	23.08	5.26
Cluster Model	Students in remote and rural schools	0	6	2	0.00	46.15	5.26
Inclusive Open Schooling	Learners in conflict/disaster zones, dropouts	1	5	5	6.25	38.46	13.16

Universal Design for Learning: Systemic Versus Minimal Adoption

UDL dominates developed contexts, with 75% adoption, highlighting how accessibility and flexibility are integrated into curricula. Countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia embed inclusive principles into teacher training and school design (Gray et al., 2017; Corbett & Slee, 2016). By comparison, UDL remains marginal in developing contexts (30.77%) and almost absent in the Philippines (2.63%). The literature (Paguirigan, 2020; Labrague, 2018) demonstrates that while policies articulate the right to inclusion, teachers lack systemic support, digital tools, and training to enact UDL principles. This mismatch between policy rhetoric and classroom reality reflects the Philippines' reliance on more practical, resource-based strategies, rather than anticipatory frameworks. The conceptual implication is clear: in resource-abundant contexts, inclusion means redesigning the system; in resource-constrained ones, it means working around the system.

Resource Rooms and Partial Mainstreaming

The Resource Room Model, present in 50% of developed and 46.15% of developing countries, exemplifies a transitional approach. While effective in bridging gaps between specialized and mainstream classrooms, its presence in the Philippines is minimal (7.89%). Studies show resource rooms are used for students with cognitive and behavioral difficulties (Labrague, 2018; Manos, 2024), yet widespread adoption is hindered by shortages of SPED teachers, inadequate facilities, and limited funding (Comia, 2021). Unlike developed

countries where resource rooms supplement UDL frameworks, in the Philippines they substitute for systemic inclusion, reflecting a conceptual shift from **bridging gaps to filling voids left by underfunded systems.

Co-Teaching and Collaboration Gaps

Co-Teaching, which enables collaboration between general and special educators, is robust in developed contexts (62.5%) but sparse in developing countries (23.08%) and the Philippines (5.26%). The disparity reflects not only a lack of training but also weak institutional incentives for collaboration. Studies (Rosales & Rosales, 2019; Formoso, 2019) emphasize that Philippine teachers support inclusion but often work in isolation without structural backing. In developed systems, co-teaching fosters differentiated instruction and professional synergy, while in the Philippines, it remains sporadic, dependent on individual initiative rather than systemic frameworks. This conceptual divergence highlights that inclusion in developed contexts is collaborative by design, whereas in developing contexts, it is individual by necessity.

Multitiered System of Supports: Proactive versus Reactive Approaches

MTSS is another example of proactive systemic inclusion, widely used in developed countries (56.25%) but nearly absent in the Philippines (2.63%). Developed contexts employ MTSS for early screening, data-driven interventions, and behavioral support, reducing exclusionary practices. In the Philippines, interventions remain reactive, often implemented only when problems escalate (Shaeffer, 2019; Cantos & Celindro, 2021). This illustrates a conceptual shift: developed countries anticipate and prevent barriers, whereas developing contexts, such as the Philippines, respond after barriers have manifested. The absence of institutional capacity for data management, monitoring, and intervention design is a key factor in explaining this gap.

Inclusive Mainstreaming: Widespread but Limited Transformation

Inclusive mainstreaming is dominant in developing countries (84.62%) and is also evident in the Philippines (13.16%). This model prioritizes the enrollment and classroom integration of marginalized learners, but it rarely leads to transformative pedagogy. Philippine laws and DepEd policies mandate the mainstreaming of inclusive education, yet classroom practices often fail to provide differentiated instruction (Basister & Valenzuela, 2021; Medina et al., 2022). The high percentages in developing contexts indicate that mainstreaming is perceived as the most feasible approach, given resource constraints. However, this also exposes the limits of inclusion understood as access alone, without the systemic reforms needed to ensure meaningful participation.

Special Needs Integration: Substitution for Systemic Inclusion

Special Needs Integration is more common in developing countries (69.23%) and is also present in the Philippines (10.53%), whereas it is less visible in developed contexts (18.75%). It reflects a reliance on placing learners with significant disabilities in mainstream settings without restructuring the environment to accommodate them. Philippine cases (Medina et al., 2022; Cuizon, 2024) highlight how integration often isolates learners due to inadequate teacher training. Thus, in developing settings, integration substitutes for inclusion, reinforcing the notion that systemic frameworks are absent, and integration becomes a pragmatic alternative.

Community-Based Rehabilitation: Localized and Culturally Grounded

CBR is absent in developed countries but significant in developing contexts (61.54%) and present in the Philippines (7.89%). It reflects a culturally grounded, context-sensitive model that leverages community partnerships. Philippine studies, particularly on the Ayta community in Zambales (Cucio & Roldan, 2020), demonstrate how CBR fosters localized curricula and culturally appropriate pedagogy. While less formalized than UDL or MTSS, CBR represents a conceptual expansion of inclusion beyond schools, adapting to socio-cultural realities. Its strength lies in mobilizing community resources where formal infrastructure is lacking.

Itinerant Teacher and Cluster Models: Reaching the Marginalized

The Itinerant Teacher Model appears in developed (31.25%), developing (23.08%), and Philippine (5.26%) contexts. It supports isolated learners by deploying mobile specialists; however, the Philippine application is limited by funding constraints (Rico, 2019). The Cluster Model, common in developing countries (46.15%) and emerging in the Philippines (5.26%), enables schools to pool SPED resources (Omoso & Villarente, 2024). Both models highlight strategies to extend inclusion geographically, yet their adoption in the Philippines remains limited and uneven. Conceptually, these models shift inclusion from individual classrooms to networks of schools, though scalability remains a challenge.

Inclusive Open Schooling: Addressing Conflict and Disasters

Inclusive Open Schooling is moderately used in developing contexts (38.46%) and the Philippines (13.16%), addressing learners displaced by disasters, conflict, or dropout. The Philippines, with its disaster-prone geography, uses DepEd's Alternative Learning System (ALS) to re-engage marginalized learners (Formoso, 2019; Jugan et al., 2024). This reflects a context-responsive expansion of inclusion, ensuring continuity of learning under crisis conditions. While limited in scope, it demonstrates innovation in addressing exclusion where traditional schooling often falls short.

Synthesis: Divergence and Convergence

The comparative analysis reveals a clear divergence between developed and developing contexts. Developed countries prioritize systemic, proactive, and collaborative frameworks such as UDL, MTSS, and Co-Teaching, enabled by strong institutional support. Developing countries and the Philippines emphasize integrationist and community-based approaches like Inclusive Mainstreaming, Special Needs Integration, and CBR, shaped by limited resources and socio-political constraints. However, convergence is also visible: all contexts recognize students with disabilities and marginalized groups as primary beneficiaries of inclusive education. The Philippine profile emerges as a hybrid, combining policy-driven mainstreaming with localized community initiatives, yet hampered by uneven implementation.

Figure 3. Specific types of disabilities, Exceptionalities, and marginalized groups

Types Disabilities, Exceptionalities, and Marginalized Groups in Inclusive Education	Frequency			Percentage		
	Developed Countries	Developing Countries	Philippines	Developed Countries (N=16)	Developing Countries (N=13)	Philippines (N=38)
Students with Disabilities	15	10	25	93.75	76.92	65.79
Giftedness	5	2	2	31.25	15.38	5.26
Savant Syndrome	1	0	0	6.25	0.00	0.00
Twice-Exceptionality	2	0	1	12.50	0.00	2.63
LGBTQIA+ Groups	3	1	2	18.75	7.69	5.26
Indigenous Communities	4	3	5	25.00	23.08	13.16
Economically Disadvantaged Students	10	8	16	62.50	61.54	42.11
Ethnic Minorities	8	5	7	50.00	38.46	18.42
Linguistic Minorities	3	2	4	18.75	15.38	10.53
Children with Learning Disabilities	12	8	20	75.00	61.54	52.63
Physical Disabilities	9	6	14	56.25	46.15	36.84
Emotional/Behavioral Disorders	6	4	9	37.50	30.77	23.68

Students with Disabilities as the Core of Inclusion

Across global contexts, students with disabilities consistently take center stage in inclusive education frameworks. As reflected in Figure 3, developed countries report near-universal inclusion (93.75%), while developing countries (76.92%) and the Philippines (65.79%) also prioritize this group, albeit with uneven implementation. In developed contexts such as Canada and Australia, inclusion is operationalized through individualized education plans (IEPs), mandated reasonable adjustments, and comprehensive teacher preparation programs (Gray, Wilcox, & Nordstokke, 2017; Corbett & Slee, 2016). These nations institutionalize accessibility through legal mandates, school-based psychological support, and national policies aligned with rights-based frameworks. Developing countries, by contrast, often express commitment in policy but struggle with practical implementation due to resource constraints, limited teacher training, and inadequate infrastructure, as observed in India and Indonesia (Tiwari, Das, & Sharma, 2015; Efendi, 2018).

In the Philippines, disability inclusion is recognized through strategies such as differentiated instruction, community-based partnerships, and resource allocation (Paguirigan, 2020; Cantos & Celindro, 2021). However, local research reveals systemic barriers, including insufficient funding, fragmented policy enforcement, and limited diagnostic and intervention services (Zerrudo, 2022; Alcosero et al., 2023). While disability remains the cornerstone of Philippine inclusive education, the evidence suggests that sustained teacher support, stronger policy coherence, and infrastructure investment are crucial for genuine equity. The comparison highlights a conceptual shift: whereas developed countries frame inclusion through systemic and policy-driven mechanisms, the Philippines and other developing nations still rely heavily on localized interventions without consistent national integration.

Learning and Physical Disabilities: Common but Unequally Addressed

Learning disabilities are recognized as one of the most prevalent categories globally, present in 75% of developed countries, 61.54% of developing countries, and 52.63% of the Philippine population. Conditions such as dyslexia, ADHD, and specific learning disorders are explicitly mentioned, with developed contexts emphasizing early screening and intervention. For example, Germany emphasizes the importance of special educators in assisting mainstream teachers in providing differentiated support (Saloviita, 2020). Philippine scholarship mirrors this recognition but underscores the need for more robust systems of identification and teacher preparedness, as documented by Medina et al. (2022) and Miguel (2017). This suggests that, although awareness exists, the Philippines remains limited in institutionalizing assessment frameworks on a large scale.

Physical disabilities follow similar patterns, with more systematic attention in developed contexts (56.25%) compared to developing countries (46.15%) and the Philippines (36.84%). Developed nations such as Australia and Canada ensure physical accessibility through infrastructural design, legal mandates, and universal design for learning (Tahir, et al. (2019); Loreman, 2014). Philippine studies, on the other hand, emphasize the role of resource allocation and teacher training (Alcosero et al., 2023), but national accessibility remains inconsistent, particularly in rural and low-resource schools. This reveals a structural inequity in the Philippine education system, where physical accessibility is often left to individual schools or local government initiatives rather than guaranteed through systemic mandates.

Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: An Emerging but Underdeveloped Area

Students with emotional and behavioral disorders are acknowledged in developed countries at 37.5%, followed by developing nations (30.77%) and the Philippines (23.68%). Western contexts emphasize integrated school-based psychological services, teacher collaboration, and structured behavioral interventions (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020; Saloviita, 2020). In the Philippines, however, while studies acknowledge behavioral challenges (Cucio & Roldan, 2020), comprehensive support systems, such as mental health professionals and structured interventions, remain absent in most schools. This indicates that inclusive education in the Philippines continues to operate within a deficit-oriented framework that addresses observable disabilities but neglects socio-emotional needs. The data support a conceptual shift: inclusion must evolve from a narrow disability-based model to a broader one that incorporates mental health and psychosocial dimensions.

Socio-Economic Disadvantage: Recognized Globally, Underemphasized Locally

Economically disadvantaged students are highly visible in both developed (62.5%) and developing countries (61.54%), but significantly less so in the Philippines (42.11%). Internationally, poverty is acknowledged as a major barrier to education, limiting access, participation, and retention (Kang, 2014; Tiwari et al., 2015). In the Philippines, although studies recognize poverty's impact (Labrague, 2018; Cuizon, 2024), national inclusive education discourse continues to emphasize disability while underplaying structural inequities. This signals a limitation in Philippine scholarship, where inclusive education is narrowly constructed rather than addressing the intersection of disability and socio-economic exclusion. Consistently, the underrepresentation of other marginalized groups—such as indigenous, ethnic, and linguistic minorities—remains a related challenge.

Indigenous, Ethnic, and Linguistic Minorities: Gaps in Philippine Representation

Indigenous and ethnic minorities occupy a stronger presence in international literature compared to Philippine studies. Indigenous communities are included in 25% of developed contexts and 23.08% of developing countries, but only 13.16% in the Philippines. Global examples highlight culturally responsive pedagogy and targeted supports, such as in the Czech Republic's integration of Roma learners (Stepaniuk, 2019) and African models emphasizing "ubuntu" as a collective ethic of inclusion (Pather, 2019). Philippine studies, while acknowledging groups like the Ayta (Cucio & Roldan, 2020; Magtuba & Caballero, 2024), remain sparse and lack systemic recommendations for curriculum reform or culturally responsive teaching. Similarly, ethnic minorities are prominently featured in developed countries (50%) and developing contexts (38.46%) but are underrepresented in the Philippines (18.42%). Linguistic minorities follow a similar pattern, with representation being highest in developed contexts (18.75%) but minimal in Philippine literature (10.53%). This gap is striking given the Philippines' multilingual setting, where language often serves as both an access point and barrier. While studies like Panoy (2024) and Medina et al. (2022) acknowledge language barriers, systematic engagement with multilingual education within inclusive frameworks remains limited. The absence of robust scholarship on these groups indicates a significant blind spot, suggesting that Philippine inclusive education needs to broaden its lens beyond disability to encompass cultural and linguistic equity.

Giftedness, Twice-Exceptionality, and Savant Syndrome: The Neglected Spectrum

Globally, high-ability learners such as the gifted, twice-exceptional, and those with savant syndrome are underrepresented in inclusive education discourse. Giftedness is most prevalent in developed contexts (31.25%), but is minimal in developing countries (15.38%) and the Philippines (5.26%). Twice-exceptionality, where students exhibit both exceptional abilities and disabilities, is recognized in 12.5% of developed contexts but only 2.63% in the Philippines. Savant syndrome has been reported in only one documented case. This neglect highlights a deficit-focused orientation, where inclusive education primarily addresses vulnerabilities while overlooking and undernurturing exceptional talents. Philippine literature reflects this imbalance, with limited engagement in works like Javier (2023), but largely overlooking gifted and twice-exceptional learners. This indicates a missed opportunity to align inclusion not only with remediation but also with talent development and enrichment.

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LGBTQIA+ and Gender-Diverse Learners: Persistent Invisibility

LGBTQIA+ and gender-diverse students represent one of the most persistently invisible groups in inclusive education literature, particularly in the Philippines.

Toward a Broader and More Equitable Framework

The comparative data from Figure 3 reveal both progress and limitations in global inclusive education. Developed countries tend to adopt more holistic frameworks, integrating disabilities, socio-economic disadvantage, and cultural-linguistic diversity. Developing countries, while echoing these priorities, often struggle with implementation gaps due to systemic limitations. Philippine literature demonstrates a strong commitment to disability inclusion but remains narrowly focused, underrepresenting socio-economic, linguistic, cultural, and gender-based marginalization.

A conceptual shift emerges from this comparison: inclusion must evolve from being disability-centered to intersectional, recognizing the interplay of socio-economic status, culture, language, gender, and exceptional talents. The data from Figure 3 substantiate this shift, revealing disproportionate attention to disability at the expense of other groups.

Figure 4. Strategies for Addressing Unique Needs

Strategies for Addressing Unique Needs in Inclusive Education	Frequency			Percentage		
	Developed Countries	Developing Countries	Philippines	Developed Countries (N=16)	Developing Countries (N=13)	Philippines (N=38)
Differentiated Instruction	15	10	6	93.75	76.92	15.79
Culturally Responsive Teaching	8	5	3	50.00	38.46	7.89
Teacher Training/Professional Development	12	10	5	75.00	76.92	13.16
Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)	10	9	4	62.50	69.23	10.53
Resource Allocation for Special Needs	9	7	5	56.25	53.85	13.16
Community Engagement and Parental Involvement	7	6	4	43.75	46.15	10.53
Collaboration between Specialists	6	5	3	37.50	38.46	7.89
Emphasis on Social-Emotional Learning	10	8	5	62.50	61.54	13.16
Support for Twice-Exceptional Learners	4	2	1	25.00	15.38	2.63
Gifted and Talented Programs	5	3	2	31.25	23.08	5.26
Adaptations for Savant Syndrome Learners	3	2	1	18.75	15.38	2.63
Utilization of Technology	8	6	3	50.00	46.15	7.89

The data in Figure 4 highlights patterns, synergies, and gaps that demonstrate the extent of inclusivity in practice. This shift is supported by literature that emphasizes inclusive education as a system of interdependent strategies rather than isolated interventions (Muega, 2016; Sales, 2019; Rosales & Rosales, 2019; Alcosero et al., 2023). In advanced inclusive systems, all of the strategies—differentiated instruction, teacher training, IEPs, SEL, resource allocation, and culturally responsive practices—tend to coexist. By contrast, fragmented or underdeveloped systems, such as in many developing contexts and the Philippines, exhibit uneven adoption, leaving significant gaps for certain learner groups such as gifted and twice-exceptional students.

Differentiated Instruction as the Foundation of Inclusive Pedagogy

Differentiated instruction stands as the most widely cited strategy, present in 93.75% of developed country studies, 76.92% of developing country studies, and 15.79% in Philippine literature. Its prominence demonstrates a near-universal recognition that teaching must adapt to learners' readiness, interests, and profiles. In developed contexts, differentiated instruction is not only emphasized but also supported by smaller class sizes, better-resourced schools, and extensive teacher training programs, making implementation more effective (Sales, 2019). Developing countries also prioritize this approach, but often face systemic barriers such as overcrowded classrooms and inadequate instructional materials, which constrain its effectiveness. In the Philippines, although relatively few studies highlight differentiated instruction, Muega (2016) stresses its necessity for managing heterogeneous classrooms, underscoring the importance of teacher support and resources for real-world practice. This suggests that while the strategy is theoretically endorsed, operational challenges prevent it from becoming a widespread practice.

Teacher Training and Professional Development as a Linchpin

Teacher training and professional development emerge as another cornerstone of inclusive practice, appearing in 75% of developed country studies, 76.92% of developing countries, and only 13.16% in Philippine sources. The relative consistency across developed and developing contexts highlights the global consensus that teachers are the linchpin of inclusive education. Professional development equips teachers to adapt curricula, manage diversity, and develop inclusive attitudes (Tiwari et al., 2015). In developed systems, this training is often continuous and institutionalized, ensuring sustainability. Developing countries demonstrate enthusiasm for such initiatives, though limited budgets and competing educational priorities hinder large-scale rollout. In the Philippines, the low frequency points to gaps in both pre-service and in-service training. The conceptual implication is clear: without building teacher competence, other strategies—such as differentiated instruction or IEPs—remain aspirational rather than actionable.

Individualized Education Plans and Targeted Interventions

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are reported in 62.5% of developed contexts, 69.23% in developing, and 10.53% in Philippine studies. IEPs represent one of the most personalized strategies, offering targeted interventions tailored to the unique needs of learners with disabilities. In developed systems, IEPs are typically part of broader frameworks that ensure accountability and monitoring. In developing countries, adoption is enthusiastic but often limited to specific disabilities. Focusing on the Philippines, Rosales and Rosales (2019) stress the necessity of IEPs but highlight how the application is narrow, excluding gifted and twice-exceptional learners. As a result, while inclusion is often framed around disability, advanced

learners remain invisible in current practices. A more expansive interpretation of IEPs could bridge this divide, ensuring that all exceptionalities—not just those associated with deficits—are addressed.

Emphasis on Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is recognized in 62.5% of developed country studies, 61.54% of developing countries, and 13.16% in Philippine literature. SEL emphasizes resilience, empathy, and self-regulation, skills particularly crucial for twice-exceptional learners who may excel academically but struggle emotionally. In developed contexts, SEL is institutionalized through curriculum frameworks and teacher training, while in developing countries, it is increasingly integrated, albeit unevenly. The Philippines demonstrates growing awareness but lacks systemic integration, leaving SEL initiatives dependent on individual school efforts. The data suggest that SEL represents not just a supplementary program but an essential component of inclusive systems that recognize learners' holistic needs.

Resource Allocation and Systemic Equity

Resource allocation appears in 56.25% of developed country studies, 53.85% in developing countries, and 13.16% in Philippine literature. The figures underscore that inclusive education requires more than pedagogy; it demands equitable resources such as assistive technologies, specialized personnel, and learning materials. Alcosero et al. (2023) argue that equitable distribution of resources is a prerequisite for genuine inclusion. In developed systems, resource allocation is embedded in legal and policy frameworks. Developing countries often aspire to resource adequacy but face fiscal constraints. The Philippines reflects the most significant resource inequities, particularly between urban and rural schools, reinforcing structural exclusion. Thus, resource allocation is not merely a technical matter but a social justice imperative.

Secondary but Crucial Strategies: CRT, Parental Engagement, Collaboration, and Technology

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is present in 50% of developed country studies, 38.46% in developing countries, and 7.89% in Philippine studies. CRT ensures that instruction validates cultural identities, particularly for indigenous and linguistically diverse learners. Cucio and Roldan (2020) highlight its importance in Philippine contexts, especially for indigenous learners, though broader applications remain limited. Similarly, Community Engagement and Parental Involvement appear in 43.75% of developed, 46.15% of developing, and 10.53% of Philippine studies. While the Philippines emphasizes community-based initiatives, sustainability often falters without institutional backing.
Collaboration between Specialists is reported in 37.5% of developed, 38.46% of developing, and 7.89% of Philippine literature. Effective inclusion requires interdisciplinary teams, but specialist shortages, particularly in the Philippines, make this difficult to operationalize. Finally, the Utilization of Technology appears in 50% of developed, 46.15% of developing, and 7.89% in the Philippine contexts. While developed systems harness assistive technologies to expand access, resource limitations in the Philippines reflect a persistent digital divide that limits scalability.

Neglected Strategies for Exceptional Minorities

The most striking pattern is the neglect of strategies for gifted, twice-exceptional, and savant learners. Support for twice-exceptional learners is recognized in 25% of developed, 15.38% of developing, and only 2.63% of Philippine studies. Gifted programs appear in 31.25% of developed, 23.08% of developing, and

5.26% of Philippine sources. Adaptations for savant learners are virtually absent. Collectively, these figures illustrate a troubling imbalance: inclusion is conceptualized narrowly around disability, leaving advanced learners marginalized. This observation aligns with global critiques that inclusive education often overlooks giftedness, reinforcing the misconception that inclusion serves only deficits rather than the full spectrum of diversity.

Toward a Unified and Balanced View of Inclusive Strategies

The data reveal a fragmented picture: while foundational strategies such as differentiated instruction, teacher training, IEPs, and SEL are widely recognized, their coexistence is inconsistent across contexts. Developed systems display greater maturity by integrating multiple strategies into cohesive frameworks. In contrast, developing countries, while aspiring toward similar comprehensiveness, struggle with resource and infrastructure limitations. The Philippines lags in both frequency and scope, highlighting systemic gaps that demand urgent attention. The necessary conceptual shift is to recognize that inclusive education is not a menu of options but a systemic ecology where strategies reinforce one another. For example, differentiated instruction is most effective when combined with teacher training, adequate resources, SEL, and culturally responsive practices. Without such integration, inclusion risks becoming partial and inequitable.

Figure 5. Challenges and Barriers.

Challenges and Barriers	Frequency			Percentage		
	Developed Countries	Developing Countries	Philippines	Developed Countries (N=16)	Developing Countries (N=13)	Philippines (N=38)
Inadequate teacher training	9	13	12	56.25	100.00	31.58
Lack of resources	8	12	11	50.00	92.31	28.95
Societal stigma towards disabilities	6	10	10	37.50	76.92	26.32
Insufficient policy implementation	5	8	6	31.25	61.54	15.79
Systemic barriers	4	5	8	25.00	38.46	21.05
Resistance from educators	4	6	4	25.00	46.15	10.53
Cultural perceptions/about disability	2	3	1	12.50	23.08	2.63
Lack of awareness about rights	2	5	4	12.50	38.46	10.53
Inadequate infrastructure	1	6	4	6.25	46.15	10.53
Limited parental support	1	2	3	6.25	15.38	7.89

Figure 5 shows the frequency distribution of challenges hindering inclusive education across developed countries, developing countries, and the Philippines. These frequencies highlight common obstacles, but also encourage deeper engagement with the literature to understand the numbers. Instead of treating the data as a simple tally, this section explains how each barrier appears in different contexts, the conceptual changes it shows, and the supporting evidence. The method uses a comparative systematic literature review, where coded data from studies are grouped by theme and examined in their context. This approach moves from descriptive statistics to interpretive analysis. It reveals how barriers are linked, shaped by local realities, and reflect broader systemic dynamics.

Inadequate Teacher Training as a Universal Challenge

Inadequate teacher training was the most common challenge. It appeared in 56.25% of developed country studies, 100% of developing country studies, and 31.58% of Philippine studies. Teacher preparedness is a key concept in inclusive education and affects how policy becomes practice. Even in the United States and Canada, Hardy and Woodcock (2015) and Gray et al. (2017) found a gap between inclusion policies and teachers' readiness to adapt. This suggests that resources alone do not ensure inclusion if teachers lack specialized skills. In India (Tiwari et al., 2015) and Indonesia (Efendi, 2018), the problem is systemic: pre-service programs rarely include inclusive practices, and in-service training is uncommon. The Philippines reflects a middle ground. Rosales and Rosales (2019) and Javier (2023) note that training modules exist, but are fragmented, focused on cities, and not broad enough. This shows that inclusive education cannot advance on legislation or infrastructure alone. Teachers' skills and confidence are essential, and without them, policy remains idealistic.

Resource Shortages and Unequal Distribution

The second most cited barrier is the lack of resources, identified in 50% of developed contexts, 92.31% of developing contexts, and 28.95% of Philippine studies. While developing countries understandably struggle with budgetary constraints, what is striking is their persistence in developed settings. Corbett and Slee (2016) argue that even in Australia, the inequitable allocation of funding creates pockets of under-resourced schools, limiting consistent service delivery. In Bangladesh, Ahmmed et al. (2014) illustrate how resource scarcity compounds exclusion, as schools fail to provide assistive devices or support personnel. The Philippine case echoes these concerns, with Muega (2016) documenting disparities in funding, particularly in rural public schools, where access to assistive technologies and teacher aides is minimal. The data reveal a conceptual shift from viewing resources solely in terms of quantity to recognizing issues of distribution, sustainability, and targeted investment. Without addressing these dimensions, the inclusive agenda risks remaining symbolic rather than substantive.

Persistent Societal Stigma and Cultural Bias

Societal stigma is a key obstacle across all regions. It is most pronounced in developing countries (76.92%) compared to developed nations (37.5%) and the Philippines (26.32%). Stigma is not limited to less developed countries, but it is worse where cultural views of disability and systemic exclusion mix. In the Czech Republic, Smyth et al. (2014) report that stigma discourages parents and hampers reforms. Paguirigan (2020) notes similar issues in the Philippines, where misconceptions persist even with inclusive laws. Stigma persists, showing a shift: inclusion is more than education reform; it is a societal change.

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Awareness campaigns, advocacy, and treating disability as part of diversity are needed to overcome these barriers.

Policy-Practice Mismatches

Many countries have inclusive education policies. However, weak policy implementation is a frequent problem. 31.25% of developed, 61.54% of developing, and 15.79% of Philippine studies noted this gap. The main challenge is not policy absence but weak enforcement, monitoring, and accountability. Casinto (2022) states that the Philippines' legal framework is undermined by poor execution, especially in rural areas with little follow-through. Developing countries face similar issues due to limited governance. Even developed countries, though better funded, struggle with implementing policies. This reveals a shift: the challenge is not just making laws but ensuring strong, accountable systems.

Systemic Barriers and Administrative Inefficiencies

The presence of systemic barriers—25% in developed, 38.46% in developing, and 21.05% in the Philippines—underscores the multi-sectoral nature of inclusion. Magtuba and Caballero (2024) emphasize that in the Philippines, fragmented administrative structures and bureaucratic inefficiencies disproportionately affect rural schools, where coordination among education, health, and social services is weakest. Developed contexts are better equipped institutionally, but still report inefficiencies in service integration. These findings suggest that inclusive education requires more than school-level reform: it demands systemic restructuring across governance, inter-agency coordination, and service delivery chains.

Educator Resistance and Mindset Challenges

Resistance from educators was identified in 25% of developed, 46.15% of developing, and 10.53% of Philippine studies. Corbett and Slee (2016) found such resistance in Australia, where teachers feared increased workload and reduced classroom control. In the Philippines, Javier (2023) reported that resistance stemmed from low confidence in inclusive strategies and a lack of institutional support. While less frequent, these findings suggest that teacher mindset—not just training—plays a pivotal role in inclusion. The conceptual shift here involves recognizing that professional development must extend beyond skill acquisition to include the cultivation of inclusive values, collaborative practices, and institutional incentives.

Infrastructure Gaps and Physical Accessibility

Inadequate infrastructure was predominantly a concern in developing contexts (46.15%) compared to developed ones (6.25%) and the Philippines (10.53%). Efendi (2018) documents how inaccessible facilities in Indonesia prevent participation, while Philippine studies highlight the persistent absence of ramps, elevators, and adapted restrooms in public schools. The low frequency in developed contexts reflects stronger compliance with accessibility laws, though occasional disparities remain. The data reinforce that physical environments are inseparable from educational inclusion**, and infrastructural neglect perpetuates exclusion despite policy frameworks.

Awareness of Disability Rights

Another critical barrier is the lack of awareness of disability rights, appearing in 12.5% of developed, 38.46% of developing, and 10.53% of Philippine studies. Srivastava et al. (2015) noted that in Vietnam, limited awareness prevented stakeholders from demanding and enforcing rights-based education. In the Philippines, rural communities similarly exhibit a weak understanding of entitlements guaranteed by law. This gap indicates that inclusion is not solely dependent on educators or policymakers but also on the empowerment of families and communities. A conceptual shift emerges here from seeing inclusion as a top-down reform to viewing it as a participatory process requiring bottom-up awareness and advocacy.

Parental Support and Community Engagement

Though the least cited challenge, limited parental support (6.25% in developed, 15.38% in developing, 7.89% in the Philippines), remains significant. In the Philippines, parental disengagement often reflects poverty-related constraints and a lack of knowledge about inclusive practices. International literature similarly emphasizes the role of family-school partnerships in sustaining inclusion. The data suggest that inclusion cannot thrive without multi-level engagement that integrates schools, families, and communities.

Comparative Insights and Conceptual Shifts

Across all categories, developed countries reported 42 instances of barriers, compared to 70 in developing contexts and 63 in the Philippines. The distribution shows that while developed countries grapple with attitudinal and training-related barriers, developing countries and the Philippines face more acute systemic, resource, and infrastructural challenges. The conceptual shift across contexts involves moving from viewing inclusion as a single-dimensional educational reform to understanding it as a multi-layered transformation requiring integration of teacher competence, resource allocation, cultural change, policy enforcement, and community engagement.

From Data to Conclusions: Methodological Rigor

The method used to move from data to conclusions involved a comparative systematic literature review wherein findings were coded into recurring themes, quantified through frequency analysis, and then re-contextualized through interpretive synthesis. This triangulation of descriptive counts with textual evidence from reviewed studies ensured that conclusions were not merely numerical summaries but reflective of lived realities captured in the literature. The resulting analysis demonstrates both common global patterns and context-specific dynamics, offering actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and advocates.

Conclusion

The present study draws the following conclusions:

- First, it shows that inclusive education models differ across settings. Developed countries focus on broad frameworks, such as UDL and MTSS. In contrast, developing countries—including the Philippines—use integrationist and resource-based approaches. Comparing Philippine practices

with global evidence shows inclusion is not universal but shaped by its context. The study highlights a gap between policy and classroom experience. It also points out hybrid strategies like community-based rehabilitation. The review is limited by uneven regional coverage, especially in Africa, and a lack of depth in methods. Still, the findings add to global discussions by placing inclusion in social and resource contexts.

- Second, the study finds that students with disabilities are central to global inclusive education. Developed countries, however, use broader frameworks. They include socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and mental health aspects. The Philippines and other developing countries keep a narrow disability focus. This leaves out issues like poverty, language, giftedness, and LGBTQIA+ students. Comparing these approaches clarifies that inclusion depends on resources and context. The limits of this review include missing coverage of Africa and shallow analysis of methods. Still, the findings show a clear need to move from disability-only models to broader, fairer systems.

- Third, the study shows inclusive education works best when strategies are used together in a system. Developed countries show this by blending methods like differentiated instruction, IEPs, SEL, teacher training, and fair resources. Developing countries, including the Philippines, use split approaches. These often miss advanced learners, indigenous people, and students with dual needs. This review explains that inclusion is a linked system, not a set of single tools. The analysis lacks full African representation and deep critiques of study methods.

- Fourth, this review shows that inclusive education faces both common and unique issues. Teacher readiness, fair resources, stigma, and system problems all play roles. In richer countries, attitudes and training still need work. In poorer countries, including the Philippines, deeper resource gaps remain. The study clarifies that inclusion is complex and layered, not a single change. The review's limits include missing African perspectives and little analysis of methods. Still, findings link inclusive education to bigger system changes, showing a move from narrow to broad, fair models.

Recommendations

Given the conclusions, the study offers the following recommendations:

- First, Inclusive education in the Philippines should prioritize strengthening teacher preparation, improving educational infrastructure, and adopting culturally responsive pedagogy. Policymakers may adapt and implement proactive models such as UDL and MTSS within local resource constraints. The goal is to establish systemic, scalable practices suited to the diverse needs of Filipino learners.

- Second, Inclusive education in the Philippines should explicitly include mental health, socio-economic equity, and cultural-linguistic responsiveness in both policy and classroom practices. Address teacher preparation, resource allocation, and community engagement as distinct priorities. Policymakers should focus on adapting intersectional models to local contexts to reach all marginalized student groups equitably.

- Third, Philippine inclusive education should institutionalize continuous teacher training, expand coverage of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and embed social emotional learning (SEL), culturally responsive teaching (CRT), and technology in daily practice. Equitably allocate resources across regions. Stakeholders should collaborate globally to integrate and adapt comprehensive, resource-sensitive frameworks for both marginalized and advanced learners.

- Fourth, Philippine inclusive education should strengthen teacher preparation, ensure equitable resource allocation, and foster cultural change. Embed accountability systems at every level. Policymakers should adapt and implement proactive, intersectional frameworks fit for diverse learners. Future research must improve methodological rigor and expand regional coverage, especially in Africa, to capture a broader range of inclusive education experiences.

Limitations of the Study

This review provides a comparative analysis of inclusive education models; however, it carries notable limitations. While the study systematically assessed risk of bias across five domains, the analysis did not deeply interrogate the methodological rigor of each included study, particularly in terms of sampling procedures, intervention fidelity, and measurement validity. Consequently, conclusions rely heavily on reported findings rather than critical appraisals of methodological soundness. Furthermore, regional representation is uneven, with African contexts largely absent. These limitations suggest caution in generalizing results and highlight the need for future reviews with deeper methodological evaluation.

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