

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: A CONCEPT ANALYSIS USING THE WALKER AND AVANT METHOD

ETHEL INOCIAN

Casa Grande Elementary School District
inocian1993@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive concept analysis of inclusive education in the Philippines using Walker and Avant's methodology. Through a systematic review of literature, policy documents, and empirical data, the research examines how inclusive education is conceptualized and implemented within the Philippine educational framework. Despite significant advancements through legislative measures such as Republic Act No. 11650 (Inclusive Education Act) and the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs), substantial challenges persist. The findings indicate that inclusive education in the Philippines aims to provide equal learning opportunities for all students, regardless of ability or disability. Key components include accommodating diverse learners, adapting curricula, and fostering supportive learning environments. The analysis emphasizes the vital role of stakeholder engagement, particularly from parents and communities, in promoting inclusive educational environments. Persistent challenges highlighted by this concept analysis include insufficient teacher training, limited resources and funding, inadequate infrastructure, prevailing societal attitudes toward people with disabilities, inflexible curricula, and inconsistent policy implementation. This concept analysis enhances the understanding of inclusive education in the Philippines and provides valuable insights for policymakers and educators. It underscores the need for sustained efforts in policy formulation, teacher capacity building, resource allocation, and stakeholder collaboration to realize the inclusive education goals in the Philippines.

KEYWORDS: *Inclusive Education, Walker-Avant Concept Analysis, Special Education, Educational Policy, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a central pillar of educational reform in the Philippines, aiming to ensure that all learners, regardless of ability or background, receive equitable access to quality education within mainstream schools. Guided by Republic Act (RA) No. 11650 and the Department of Education's (DepEd) K to 12 Basic Education Program, the country has made significant legislative strides toward institutionalizing inclusive practices and establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs) nationwide. However, the practical implementation of these policies remains inconsistent. Persistent challenges include insufficient teacher training, limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and varying degrees of stakeholder engagement, all of which hinder the realization of inclusive education at the school level. These gaps between policy and practice underscore the need for a clearer operational understanding of inclusive education tailored to the Philippine context.

This study applies Walker and Avant's (2019) eight-step concept analysis method to clarify the meaning and essential attributes of inclusive education in the Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to (1) trace the evolution of inclusive education definitions, (2) assess the current status of policy

implementation, (3) identify key attributes necessary for fostering inclusion, and (4) propose evidence-based strategies to inform future policy, research, and practice.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed Walker and Avant's (2019) eight-step concept analysis method, a systematic approach widely used in nursing but adapted here for educational research. The methodology was chosen for its applicability to the field of education, as it provides a systematic way to clarify the meaning and operationalization of inclusive education in the Philippines. Data was gathered through a systematic review of literature, policy documents, and field consultations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how the concept is defined and applied in both local and international contexts.

Table 1. Walker and Avant's Eight-Step Method

Step	Application in This Study
1. Selecting the Concept	"Inclusive education" was chosen due to its centrality in Philippine educational reforms and lack of a clear operational definition
2. Determining the Purpose	To clarify the meaning, distinguish from related concepts (mainstreaming, integration), and develop an evaluation framework
3. Identifying All Uses	Collected definitions from dictionaries, international frameworks, national laws (RA 11650), DepEd policies, and peer-reviewed literature
4. Determining Defining Attributes	Extracted core features through thematic analysis of literature and policy documents
5. Identifying a Model Case	Constructed a Philippine classroom scenario illustrating all defining attributes
6. Identifying Borderline/Contrary Cases	Developed examples that partially or do not meet the attributes, clarifying conceptual boundaries
7. Identifying Antecedents/Consequences	Reviewed policies and empirical studies to identify prerequisites and outcomes of inclusive education

8. Defining Empirical Referents	Established measurable indicators for the presence of the concept in practice
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Step 1: Selecting a Concept for Analysis

In the Walker and Avant method, the first step is to choose a concept that is significant, ambiguous, or inadequately defined within a particular field. The concept of "inclusive education" was selected due to its pivotal role in Philippine educational reforms and the ongoing challenges surrounding its implementation. The selection aligns directly with policy initiatives, academic practices, and the broader goal of achieving equity and social justice in Philippine schools.

Step 2: Determining the Purpose of the Analysis

The second step involves clarifying the specific aim of the concept analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to provide a systematic explanation of the meaning of inclusive education as applied in the Philippine context. It aims to distinguish inclusive education from related concepts such as mainstreaming and integration and to develop a framework for evaluating its effective and practical implementation in schools. This analysis serves as a tool to enhance the quality of education for all learners in the Philippines, rather than just an academic exercise.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted by the researcher following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency and replicability. Databases searched included ERIC, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. This research aimed to identify relevant peer-reviewed studies, policy documents, and empirical reports published between 2015 and 2024. Search terms included combinations of keywords such as "inclusive education," "Philippines," "disability," "policy implementation," "special education," and/or "inclusive learning resource centers" to refine the search strategy and maximize the retrieval of relevant literature.

Table 2. Electronic Search Strategies

Sources	Search Strategies
ERIC	("inclusive education" OR "special education" OR "ILRC" OR "teacher training") AND ("Philippines" OR "Filipino")
EBSCOhost	("inclusive education" OR "policy implementation" OR "disability") AND ("Philippines")
Google Scholar	("inclusive education" OR "special education" OR "Inclusive Learning Resource Centers") AND ("Philippines")

Eligibility Criteria
Table 3. Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility	Participants	Concept	Context	Language	Article Type
Inclusion	Learners, educators, or stakeholders in Philippine basic education	Publications defining, clarifying, or analyzing inclusive education or ILRC implementation	Philippine educational settings	English	Empirical studies, policy analyses, and conceptual papers
Exclusion	Studies not involving Philippine learners or education stakeholders	Publications not addressing inclusive education or not relevant to the Philippine context	Studies outside the Philippine context	Non-English	Opinion pieces, editorials, book reviews, anecdotal reports

RESULTS

Step 3: Identifying All Uses of the Concept

Inclusive education is often misunderstood as simply physical integration, without the deeper focus on meaningful inclusion.

Table 4. Definitions and Uses

Source/Framework	Definition/Use
Oxford Dictionary	"The policy of teaching all students, especially those with disabilities or special needs, in the same schools."
Thesaurus	Inclusion: participation, integration, acceptance
RA 11650 (Philippines)	"A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of learners."
DepEd Policy	It includes all learners, respecting diversity and accessibility.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)	Ensuring that every learner matters equally and that all learners have access to quality education through removing barriers and embracing diversity
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)	Human rights require that persons with disabilities have access an inclusive, quality, and free education on an equal basis with others, in the communities in which they live
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Involves educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers in the least restrictive environment appropriate, ensuring access to the general education curriculum and promoting full participation

Step 4. Determine the Defining Attributes of Inclusive Education

Table 5. Defining Attributes

Attribute	Description
Curriculum Adaptation	Modifying instruction and assessments for diverse needs (Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs), assistive technologies)
Stakeholder Engagement	Active partnership among schools, families, ILRCs, and communities
Physical/Instructional Access	Creating barrier-free environments and using flexible teaching methods
Policy Implementation	Consistent application of inclusive education laws and guidelines
Teacher Preparedness	Ongoing training in inclusive pedagogies, disability awareness, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles
Equity-Centered Mindset	Promoting respect for diversity and social justice across the school community.

Step 5: Construct a Model Case

Model Case

Constructed cases illustrate the concept by incorporating the attributes, antecedents, and consequences. As defined, a model case includes all the defining attributes (Walker & Avant, 2014, 2019).

Scenario: A public elementary school in Manila enrolls a Grade 3 student with a moderate intellectual disability. The school intentionally implements a comprehensive, inclusive approach that embodies all six defining attributes of inclusive education.

Table 6. Key Attributes of the Model Case.

Attribute	Presence in Model Case
Curriculum Adaptation	The classroom teacher modifies lessons and assessments, utilizes visual supports, and implements an IEP tailored to the student's strengths and needs
Stakeholder Engagement	Regular IEP meetings involve parents, special education teachers, and school staff, with parents actively participating in planning and monitoring
Physical/Instructional Access	The classroom includes ramps, visual schedules, and sensory tools, and provides learning materials in accessible formats
Policy Implementation	School practices align with RA 11650 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR); teachers and administrators are knowledgeable and compliant with national inclusive education policies
Teacher Preparedness	Teachers have received ongoing professional development in inclusive pedagogies and UDL
Equity-Centered Mindset	School culture emphasizes respect for diversity and social justice; students are meaningfully included in both academic and social activities, fostering a sense of belonging.

This model case illustrates that inclusive education in the Philippines requires more than simply placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms. It demands intentional curriculum adaptation, active stakeholder collaboration, accessible environments, faithful policy implementation, teacher preparedness, and a school-wide commitment to equity and empowerment. The result is a learning environment where every child, regardless of ability, can participate and thrive.

Step 6: Construct Borderline, Related, and Contrary Cases.

Borderline Case

Borderline cases contain most of the defining attributes of the concept being examined but not all of them (Walker & Avant, 2014, 2019).

Scenario: A public school in Metro Manila establishes a Special Education (SPED) center within its campus, where students with disabilities receive separate instruction for most subjects. While these students occasionally participate in school-wide events, they are primarily taught in isolated classrooms by SPED teachers. The school claims compliance with RA 11650 by offering "inclusive education," but mainstream teachers rarely collaborate with SPED staff, and the curriculum does not support shared learning experiences.

Related Case

A related case represents a connection to the concept, albeit not a full embodiment of it (Walker & Avant, 2014, 2019).

Scenario: A private elementary school in Cebu admits students with mild learning disabilities into regular classrooms under a "mainstreaming" policy. While these students physically attend classes alongside peers, the school provides no curriculum modifications, teacher training, or collaboration with special education professionals. The principal states, "We include everyone equally by treating all students fairly and equally."

Contrary Case

Contrary cases demonstrate a clear example of when the concept is absent (Walker & Avant, 2014, 2019).

Scenario: A provincial high school enrolls students with disabilities in regular classrooms without modifications. The school places a student with autism in a class of 50 students, where the teacher lacks training in inclusive pedagogies. The school lacks ILRCs, IEPs, or assistive tools, and as a result, excludes the student from activities due to "disruptive behavior." People blame parents for their child's struggles, and the administration sees inclusion as a bureaucratic checkbox rather than a pedagogical commitment.

Step 7: Identify the Antecedents and Consequences

Antecedents of Inclusive Education

The iterative process of concept analysis defines antecedents as events that must occur before the emergence of the concept (Walker & Avant, 2014, 2019). Several key antecedents must be in place for inclusive education to become a reality. The enactment of RA 11650 provides the necessary legal framework for establishing ILRCs and promoting inclusive practices across educational institutions. Additionally, teacher training and curriculum development tailored toward inclusivity are critical antecedents. These foundational elements ensure that educational environments are prepared, both legally and instructionally, to meet the diverse needs of learners, thereby paving the way for effective inclusive education.

Consequences of Inclusive Education

Consequences are the events or outcomes that result from the application or existence of a concept (Walker & Avant, 2014, 2019). The implementation of inclusive education yields a range of positive and challenging consequences. Positive outcomes include improved instructional practices and increased learner engagement resulting from specialized teacher training and inclusive curriculum

design. However, inclusive education also faces challenges, such as bureaucratic delays and limited resources, which can hinder its effectiveness. Furthermore, inconsistent implementation and regional disparities in service access highlight systemic issues that may persist even after policymakers enact inclusive policies. These consequences emphasize the complex realities of translating inclusive education frameworks into meaningful practice.

Step 8: Define Empirical References

Empirical Referents

Empirical referents are classes or categories of actual phenomena that, by their existence, demonstrate the occurrence of the concept itself. These are the real-world indicators that allow us to measure or observe the presence of the defining characteristics or attributes of a concept. They provide tangible evidence that the concept is present, allowing for assessment and validation (Walker & Avant, 2014).

Table 7. Empirical Referents for Inclusive Education

Referent	Measurement Tool/Indicator
ILRC Presence	Number of operational ILRCs per region
Teacher Training	% of SPED teachers with inclusive education certification
Parent Participation	Attendance and feedback in IEP and planning meetings
Curriculum Adaptation	IEP implementation rates in inclusive classrooms
Enrollment Rates	Yearly increase of learners with disabilities in general education

DISCUSSION

This concept analysis clarifies that proper inclusive education in the Philippines requires more than the physical placement of students with disabilities in mainstream classes. The six defining attributes — curriculum adaptation, stakeholder engagement, accessibility, policy fidelity, teacher preparedness, and an equity-centered mindset — distinguish authentic inclusion from superficial compliance. While legislative milestones, such as RA 11650 and the establishment of ILRCs, demonstrate a national commitment, persistent gaps remain in teacher training, resource allocation, and implementation fidelity. The findings align with global frameworks, such as Ainscow's model of systemic adaptability, while also highlighting unique Philippine challenges, including regional disparities and the limited integration of assistive technology.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations are acknowledged. First, the study's focus on Philippine-specific literature and policies from 2015 to 2024 may restrict applicability to other contexts. Second, language and publication bias may have excluded grassroots perspectives. Third, the focus on recent policy shifts may overlook historical trends. Fourth, thematic analysis for attribute identification relies on the researcher's interpretation of the data. Fifth, reliance on self-reported data from educators and policymakers introduces the risk of social desirability bias. Finally, the absence of direct input from students with disabilities means that the analysis lacks the lived experiences of learners themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

This concept analysis refines the understanding of inclusive education in the Philippines, distinguishing it from superficial compliance and harmful misapplications. The clarified definition of systemic, equity-centered practice, which requires synchronized curriculum adaptation, stakeholder collaboration, policy fidelity, and teacher preparedness, provides a measurable framework for evaluating the quality of inclusion. Bridging the gap between legislation and classroom realities requires sustained investment in teacher development, resource distribution, and culturally responsive implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Advancing inclusive education in the Philippines necessitates a coordinated approach across policy, practice, and research. Policymakers should prioritize the strict enforcement of timelines outlined in the IRR of RA 11650, while also increasing funding to strengthen ILRCs, expand access to assistive technologies, and support ongoing professional development for teachers. At the school level, educators are encouraged to adopt UDL frameworks and to foster meaningful family and community partnerships, primarily through active engagement in the IEP process. To ensure continuous improvement, researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate the effectiveness of ILRCs and inclusive interventions, generating evidence-based insights that can inform future policy and practice and ultimately guarantee equitable, high-quality education for all learners.

Abbreviations

1. DepEd – Department of Education
2. ILRC – Inclusive Learning Resource Center
3. IEP – Individualized Education Program
4. IRR – Implementing Rules and Regulations
5. PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
6. RA – Republic Act
7. SPED – Special Education
8. UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
9. UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
10. UDL – Universal Design for Learning

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