#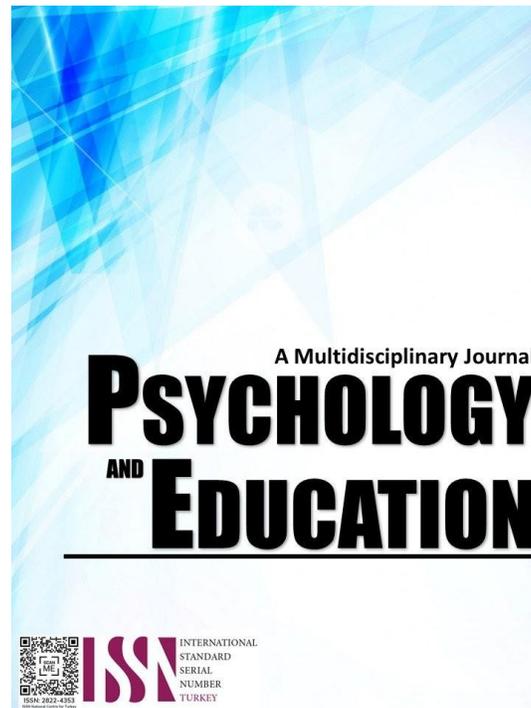 ASSESSING LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES AND TEACHER COMPETENCE IN IDENTIFYING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Assessing Learners' Difficulties and Teacher Competence in Identifying the Characteristics of Specific Learning Disabilities in an Inclusive Education Program

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Abstract

This study examined the difficulties faced by learners and the competence of teachers in identifying characteristics of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) within an inclusive education program at Lila Central Elementary School Cluster, Lila District, Bohol Division, for the school year 2023–2024. The research aimed to address gaps in teacher preparedness and provide actionable strategies for improving support for learners with SLDs, serving as the basis for a comprehensive intervention plan. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to explore relationships between learners' profiles, their difficulties, and teacher competence in identifying SLD characteristics. Data were collected from 16 teachers and 40 learners using adapted survey instruments, including the Questionnaire on Teachers' Competence in Identifying Pupils with Learning Disabilities (QTCIPLD). Key findings highlighted that most teachers were experienced professionals with general education backgrounds but lacked specialized training in SLD identification. Learners with SLDs, predominantly male and aged 5–8, faced persistent challenges in arithmetic, reading, and writing, compounded by socioeconomic disadvantages that limited their access to medical and educational resources. Statistical analysis revealed that age significantly influenced learners' difficulties, while teacher competence was associated with the number of SLD learners they handled and their participation in training and seminars. The study underscores the importance of targeted professional development for teachers and age-appropriate interventions to address learners' academic and communication challenges. Recommendations include specialized teacher training, implementation of programs for dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, parental support initiatives, and the establishment of a dedicated special education facility. These findings contribute to bridging gaps in inclusive education and enhancing equitable learning opportunities for students with special needs.

Keywords: *inclusive education, learner difficulties, professional development, specific learning disabilities (sld), and teacher competence*

Introduction

The concept of learning disabilities (LD) encompasses a diverse range of challenges that affect individuals' ability to acquire and apply specific skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking, and mathematical reasoning. Learning disabilities manifest differently among individuals, with some struggling in one domain while others face multiple challenges. In inclusive education settings, addressing these unique needs is crucial for fostering equitable learning opportunities.

Globally, approximately 15% of the population experiences some form of disability, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011). In the Philippines, among its 100 million citizens, 15 million are classified as disabled learners, with 3.3 million identified as students (UNICEF, 2014). Despite policies advocating inclusivity, many learners with disabilities encounter barriers to fully participating in the K–12 Basic Education system. These barriers often arise from insufficient teacher competence in identifying and addressing specific learning disabilities, leading to ineffective instruction and poor academic outcomes.

To bridge this gap, the Philippine government has implemented various laws, including the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities (RA 7277, as amended by RA 9442), the Enhanced Basic Education Act (RA 10533), and the Inclusive Education Act (RA 11650), which emphasize equitable education and skill development for learners with disabilities. These laws underline the government's responsibility to design inclusive policies, adapt infrastructure, and ensure that educators are equipped to meet the diverse needs of students.

However, effective implementation requires more than legislative frameworks. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering inclusive classrooms, yet many lack the training to identify and address learning disabilities effectively. According to Alahmadi and El Keshky (2019), a lack of professional competence often leaves educators hesitant to provide necessary accommodations, fearing misdiagnoses and legal repercussions. These challenges result in underserved students, limited opportunities for self-actualization, and restricted pathways to independence. Similarly, Williams, Singh, and Narayan (2013) highlighted that some educators are unprepared to identify learning disabilities, further hindering efforts to provide targeted support.

Learning disabilities significantly affect students' academic and personal development. Dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia, among the most common learning disabilities, impact critical areas such as reading, math, and writing skills (Gupta, 2014; Nagavalli, 2015). Without proper diagnosis and intervention, students often face challenges that extend beyond academics, including low self-esteem and behavioral issues (Indiana Department of Education, 2017; Stromstad, Nes, & Skogen, 2004).

To address these challenges, this study draws on key theoretical frameworks. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development emphasizes

scaffolding to help students achieve independence in learning (Farahani & Maleki, 2014). Bandura's Social Learning Theory underscores the importance of fostering social integration and effective communication for students with special needs (Lamport, 2014). Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory highlights the need to present information in manageable "chunks" to prevent cognitive overload and enhance long-term retention (Main, 2022). These theories collectively inform the study's approach to evaluating teacher competence and identifying effective interventions.

By examining teacher competence and learner difficulties within inclusive education programs, this research aims to propose actionable strategies that enhance academic success for students with learning disabilities. The findings will contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive education, aligning with global goals for equity and inclusivity. Through these efforts, this study supports the advancement of the Philippine educational system and ensures that all learners, regardless of their abilities, have access to quality education.

Research Questions

This study assessed learners' difficulties and competence of teachers in identifying the characteristics of learners with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in an inclusive education program at Lila Central Elementary School Cluster, Lila District, Bohol Division for the school year 2023 – 2024 as a basis for an intervention plan. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following problems/ sub-variables:

1. What is the profile of the respondent groups in terms of:
    1.1. Teachers
        1.1.1. age and gender,
        1.1.2. area of specialization
        1.1.3. educational attainment,
        1.1.4. years of teaching experience,
        1.1.5. number of learners with learning difficulties in class, and
        1.1.6. trainings/seminars attended in identifying SLD?
    1.2. Learners profile as assessed by teacher–respondent,
        1.2.1. age and gender,
        1.2.2. types of difficulties,
        1.2.3. parent occupation,
        1.2.4. socio-economic status, and
        1.2.5. number of siblings?
2. As assessed by the teacher-respondent, what is the level of learner's difficulties in an inclusive education program in terms of:
    2.1. memory
    2.2. comprehension of spoken language,
    2.3. expressive language,
    2.4. verbal communication,
    2.5. acquisition of academic skills in
        2.5.1. reading,
        2.5.2. writing, and
        2.5.3. arithmetic?
3. What is the level of teacher-respondents' competence in identifying the characteristics of specific learning disabilities in an inclusive education program?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of learners and difficulties in an inclusive education?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of teacher-respondents and their competence in identifying the characteristics of SLD in an inclusive education?
6. Based on the study's findings, what intervention plan can be crafted?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationships between variables without manipulating them. Specifically, it investigated the significant relationship between learners' profiles and their learning difficulties, as well as the relationship between teacher-respondents' profiles and their competence in identifying the characteristics of specific learning disabilities (SLD) within an inclusive education setting. The research was conducted in the Lila Central Elementary School Cluster, Lila District, Bohol Division, and served as the basis for developing an intervention plan.

Respondents

The study involved 56 participants, consisting of 16 teachers and 40 learners enrolled in an inclusive education program. Among the

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teacher-respondents, 13 were from Lila Central Elementary School, and 3 were from Macalingan Elementary School (formerly Macalingan Primary School). The learners were identified as students suspected of having specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

Table 1. *Distribution of the Respondents of the Study*

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Teachers	16	28.57
Learners	40	71.43
Total	56	100

This table summarizes the distribution of the study's respondents, highlighting the proportion of teachers and learners involved.

Instrument

The study utilized two primary instruments for data collection. The first was the Questionnaire on Teachers' Competence in Identifying Pupils with Learning Disabilities (QTCIPLD), developed by Eyo and Nkanga (2020), which assessed teachers' competence in recognizing learning disabilities among students. The QTCIPLD included two sections: Section A, which gathered demographic data about the participants, and Section B, comprising 18 items designed to evaluate teachers' abilities to identify learning disabilities. Responses in Section B were measured using a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The second instrument was the 5-15R Questionnaire for Evaluating Development and Behavior by Kadesjö et al. (2017). This questionnaire, completed by teachers, assessed various developmental and behavioral aspects of learners, including memory, understanding of spoken language, expressive language, verbal communication, reading, writing, arithmetic, learning new information, problem-solving skills, and attitudes toward new learning experiences. The researcher adapted both instruments to align with the specific needs of the study, incorporating relevant items from the original versions to address the research problem effectively.

Procedure

The data collection process followed three phases: preliminary stage, data collection stage, and post-data collection stage.

Preliminary Stage

The researcher assessed the study's feasibility by identifying data sources and ensuring participant availability. Transmittal letters were submitted to the division superintendent, public school district supervisor, and school principals for approval to conduct the study.

Data Collection Stage

Upon approval, the researcher distributed two sets of questionnaires to participants. The first assessed teachers' competence in identifying learning disabilities, while the second focused on diagnosing specific learning difficulties among students. Data collection was conducted at convenient times for the respondents, ensuring confidentiality in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Post-Data Collection Stage

Collected data was processed using statistical tools, including percentages, mean, standard deviation, and chi-squared tests. The results were analyzed and interpreted, and transcribed data was presented to participants for verification to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis

The researcher utilized various statistical methods for data presentation and analysis.

Percentages were used to determine the profile of the respondents. The mean and standard deviation were applied to evaluate the level of learners' difficulties in an inclusive education program, as assessed by teachers, and to establish the competence of teacher-respondents in identifying characteristics of specific learning disabilities (SLD) in such programs.

The chi-squared test was employed to determine the relationship between learners' profiles and their difficulties in inclusive education, as well as the relationship between teacher-respondents' profiles and their competence in identifying SLD characteristics in inclusive education.

The assessment items were categorized into 15 domains, many of which were further divided into subdomains. The study focused on specific areas, including memory, understanding of spoken language, expressive language skills, verbal communication, academic abilities, learning new concepts, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, "influence questions" followed each domain, where teachers summarized whether the child's behavior caused difficulties in daily life.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher made sure to engage with the participants and subjects on a personal level, ensuring that their privacy was not violated without their permission and that their feelings were not harmed. Additionally, all data collected will be kept confidential, with the identities of students with learning disabilities remaining anonymous to everyone except the researcher, who will ensure that all identifying details were protected to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the statistically analyzed survey data in tabular form, accompanied by analysis and interpretation.

Table 2. *Age and Gender Distribution of Teacher-Respondents (n = 16)*

Age and Gender		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	f	%	f	%
	21-30	0	0	0	0	0	0
	31-40	1	6.25	4	25.00	5	31.25
Age	41-50	0	0	6	37.50	6	37.50
	51-60	0	0	5	31.25	5	31.25
	Total	1	6.25	15	93.75	16	100

The data reveals that there were no teacher-respondents in the 21-30 age group, indicating a lack of younger teachers in the sample. Respondents aged 31-40 and 51-60 each accounted for 31.25% of the total sample, while the 41-50 age group comprised the largest segment at 37.50%.

The gender distribution was significantly skewed, with 93.75% of respondents being female (15 individuals) and only 6.25% male (1 individual). This disparity likely reflects the workforce composition within the educational institutions studied, where females dominate the teaching profession.

The absence of younger respondents suggests limited representation of early-career educators in this study. Literature suggests that as teachers age, they often gain experience and refine their teaching strategies, enabling them to support student learning more effectively (David, 1972). However, there is a concern that enthusiasm for teaching may diminish over time, potentially impacting performance (Shilpa Rajesh Shah et al., 2018).

Gender-wise, prior research indicates that students may perceive female teachers as more empathetic and understanding (Feldman, 1993), but male teachers may be rated higher for classroom management and strictness (Kierstead et al., 1988). This aligns with findings suggesting that gendered expectations influence how students evaluate teacher effectiveness.

Overall, the data underscores the need for balanced representation across age groups and genders to enrich teaching practices and address diverse student needs effectively.

Table 3. *Area of Specialization (n = 16)*

Area Of Specialization		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		F	%	f	%	f	%
Area Of Specialization	Gen. Ed.	1	6.25	14	87.50	15	93.75
	With Specialization	0	0	1	6.25	1	6.25
	Total	1	6.25	15	93.75	16	100

The data revealed that out of 16 respondents, 93.75% (15 individuals) specialized in General Education (Gen. Ed.), with only 6.25% (1 individual) having a specialization beyond General Education. This dominant presence of General Education professionals indicates a lack of specialized training among the teachers in the sample. As a result, identifying and addressing the needs of children with special needs poses a significant challenge. Most teachers, being General Education graduates, lack the skills and competencies required for effectively teaching students with special needs. Specialization is critical for enhancing productivity, efficiency, standardization, and overall performance, emphasizing the need for professional development and training in inclusive education.

Table 4. *Educational Attainment (n = 16)*

Educational Attainment		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Educational Attainment	Doctoral Degree	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
	With Doctoral Units	0	0	1	6.25	1	6.25
	Master's degree	0	0	1	6.25	1	6.25
	With Masters Units	1	6.25	8	50.00	9	56.25
	Bachelor's degree	0	0	5	31.25	5	31.25
	Total	1	6.25	15	93.75	16	100

The data on educational attainment among the 16 respondents revealed no individuals with a Doctoral Degree. However, 6.25% of female respondents had completed Doctoral Units, and another 6.25% held a master's degree. The majority, 56.25%, had completed

Master's Units, indicating significant engagement in advanced studies without full credentials. Additionally, 31.25% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, making it the most common level of attainment.

These findings highlight the importance of teacher qualifications in ensuring quality instruction, as advanced degrees are associated with higher teaching competencies and better student outcomes (Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Tasnim, Selim, & Promi, 2020). Studies confirm a positive relationship between teachers' educational background and student achievement, with those taught by teachers holding master's Degrees achieving higher scores than those taught by teachers with bachelor's degrees (Curry et al., 2018). Globally, investments in teacher quality aim to enhance learning outcomes through well-qualified educators (Barbieri et al., 2011; Feng & Sass, 2018).

Table 5. *Years of Teaching Experience (n = 16)*

Years of Teaching Experience *		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		F	%	F	%	f	%
Years Of Teaching Experience	21 Years and above	0	0	5	31.25	5	31.25
	16-20 Years	0	0	4	25.00	4	25.00
	11-15 Years	0	0	1	6.25	1	6.25
	6-10 Years	1	6.25	5	31.25	6	37.50
	1-5 Years	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Below 1 Year	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
	Total	1	6.25	15	93.75	16	100

The table shows the distribution of respondents based on their years of teaching experience. The largest group, 37.5% (6 individuals, male and female), had 6–10 years of teaching experience. Following closely, 31.25% (5 female individuals) had over 21 years of experience. Another 25.0% (4 females) had 16–20 years of experience, while 6.25% (1 male) had 11–15 years. No respondents had less than 6 years of teaching experience. This data reflects a balanced representation of mid to long-term teaching experience, with a significant portion having over two decades in the profession.

The findings reinforce that teacher experience contributes to student success beyond test scores, such as improved attendance. Teachers become more effective when working in collaborative environments or with consistent grade levels, subjects, or districts. Experienced educators positively impact their colleagues, students, and the school community as a whole (Kini & Podolsky, 2016).

Table 6. *Number of Learners with Learning Difficulties in Class (n = 16)*

Number Of Learners with Learning Difficulties		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	F	%	f	%
Number Of Learners with LD in Class	5-10	0	0.00	3	18.75	3	18.75
	1-4	0	0.00	10	62.50	10	62.50
	0	1	6.25	2	12.50	3	18.75
	Total	1	6.25	15	93.75	16	100

The table provides an overview of the number of learners with Learning Disabilities (LDs) or Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) under the care of 16 teacher-respondents. The majority, 62.5% (10 teachers), worked with 1–4 learners with LDs or SLDs. Meanwhile, 18.75% (3 teachers) reported having either 5–10 learners with LDs or SLDs or no learners with such conditions.

This distribution highlights that most teachers managed a moderate number of students with LDs or SLDs, while a smaller group worked with a higher number or none at all. The variation in classroom composition underscores the diverse instructional needs and challenges associated with special education. The inclusion of students with LDs or SLDs in regular education classes remains a debated topic. Inclusion education aims to integrate all children, regardless of abilities, as members of the school community ("Sec. 300.8 Child with a Disability," n.d.). Ideally, these students should have full access to general education resources and social interactions while being supported in the least restrictive environment possible.

However, many teachers lack formal training in handling special education students, leading to challenges in meeting their needs. Despite this, students with special needs are frequently placed in general education settings (Hyunjeong et al., 2014). Research indicates that while teachers are willing to include students with special needs in their classrooms, they often feel inadequately prepared to address their unique requirements effectively.

The table 7 highlights the participation of 16 educators in professional development activities. Half of the respondents (50.0%) attended 1–5 seminars or training sessions, reflecting moderate engagement. However, 43.8% reported no attendance at such activities, indicating a lack of recent professional development opportunities. Only one respondent (6.3%) attended 11 or more sessions, representing a small group of highly engaged educators. These findings suggest varying levels of involvement in training and underscore the need for consistent opportunities to enhance educators' skills and knowledge.

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Table 7. *Trainings/Seminars Attended in Identifying SLD (n = 16)*

Trainings/Seminars Attended in Identifying SLD		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Seminars And Trainings Attended	11 above	0	0	1	6.25	1	6.25
	6-10	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
	1 - 5	1	6.25	7	43.75	8	50.00
	None	0	0	7	43.75	7	43.75
	Total	1	6.25	15	93.75	16	100

Professional development is critical for enabling teachers to adapt to evolving educational demands and implement effective teaching strategies. According to Guskey (2002), ongoing training and development are essential for equipping educators to successfully enact reforms and improve student outcomes. This highlights the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning to support teacher growth and educational quality.

Table 8. *Age and Gender*

Age * Gender		Responses (n = 40)				Total	
		Gender					
		Male		Female			
		f	%	F	%	f	%
Age	5-8	14	35.00	9	22.50	23	57.50
	9-11	11	27.50	6	15.00	17	42.50
	Total	25	62.50	15	37.50	40	100.00

The table highlights the ages of children with learning difficulties or specific learning disabilities (SLDs). Most respondents (35.00%) were males aged 5–8 years, comprising 14 out of 40 pupils. This was followed by 27.50% of males aged 9–11 years, totaling 11 out of 40 respondents. Overall, males constituted 62.50% of the sample across both age groups, while females accounted for 37.50%. Among females, 22.50% were aged 5–8 years (9 respondents), and 15.00% were aged 9–11 years (6 respondents).

These findings suggest that most LDs or SLDs were identified in males from kindergarten to grade six, aligning with previous research. The U.S. Department of Education (1998) reported that approximately 60% of children in special education programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) were boys, with gender disparities most evident in emotional instability and specific learning disabilities. This underscores the need for further investigation into gender differences in learning disability identification and outcomes.

Table 9. *Type of Difficulties*

Type of Difficulties	Frequency	Rank
Reading	27	5
Writing	28	4
Arithmetic and Mathematical Reasoning	36	1
Expressing Thoughts and Emotions	25	6
Socio-emotional	21	7
Time Management	29	3
Academic Learning Difficulties	33	2
Others	3	8

*multiple response

The table outlines the types of difficulties experienced by individuals, ranked by frequency. Arithmetic and Mathematical Reasoning emerged as the most prevalent issue, with 36 instances, indicating significant struggles with mathematical concepts and calculations. Academic Learning Difficulties followed closely with 33 occurrences, while Time Management and Writing difficulties were reported 29 and 28 times, ranking 3rd and 4th, respectively. Reading difficulties ranked 5th with 27 instances, while challenges in Expressing Thoughts and Emotions and Socio-emotional issues were noted 25 and 21 times, ranking 6th and 7th. Lastly, "Other" difficulties were reported only 3 times, ranking 8th. This distribution highlights the prevalence of academic and organizational difficulties, alongside socio-emotional and communication challenges, emphasizing diverse support needs for individuals facing learning difficulties. According to Bradshaw (2001), such challenges often persist throughout formal education, from elementary school to college, underscoring the importance of early and sustained interventions to support affected learners.

The table 10 presented the occupations of parents of learners with learning difficulties (LDs) or specific learning disabilities (SLDs). Laborers ranked highest, accounting for 30% (12 cases), followed by farmers at 22.5% (9 cases), and house helpers at 20% (8 cases). Bus drivers comprised 12.5% (5 cases), barangay officials 7.5% (3 cases), and entrepreneurs 5% (2 cases). Online workers ranked last with 2.5% (1 case), limited to male respondents.

Table 10. *Parent Occupation (n = 40)*

Parents Occupation		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	F	%	f	%
Parent Occupation	Barangay Official	3	7.50	0	0.00	3	7.50
	Bus Driver	2	5.00	3	7.50	5	12.50
	Entrepreneur	1	2.50	1	2.50	2	5.00
	Farmer	6	15.00	3	7.50	9	22.50
	House Helper	3	7.50	5	12.50	8	20.00
	Laborer	9	22.50	3	7.5	12	30.00
	Online Worker	1	2.50	0	0.00%	1	2.50
	Total	25	62.50	15	37.50	40	100.00

The data indicated that most learners with LDs or SLDs came from economically disadvantaged families, suggesting that further clinical testing to confirm their disabilities would be financially burdensome. Zehri and Abdelbaki (2013) highlighted that parental occupation significantly influences children's education and academic performance. Parents' socioeconomic status, shaped by their occupation, determines their ability to provide educational resources, stability, and opportunities, which directly impacts their children's development and academic success.

Table 11. *Socio Economic Status (n = 40)*

Socio Economic Status *		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	F	%	f	%
Socio Economic Status	Middle Class	0	0.00	1	2.50	1	2.50
	Lower Middle Class	2	5.00	2	5.00	4	10.00
	Low Income	5	12.50	3	7.50	8	20.00
	Poor	18	45.00	9	22.50	27	67.50
	Total	25	62.50	15	37.50	40	100.00

The table highlighted the socio-economic status of families of learners with learning difficulties (LDs) or specific learning disabilities (SLDs). Most respondents, 67.5% (27 individuals), belonged to poor economic status, followed by 20% (8 individuals) in the low-income category. Additionally, 10% (4 respondents) were classified as lower middle class, and only 2.5% (1 respondent) belonged to the middle class. These findings aligned with the earlier data on parental occupations, where most were laborers, house helpers, or farmers, all of which represent economically disadvantaged roles. Research by Cowen (2011) suggested that parents from affluent families are better positioned to support their children's academic endeavors compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, children from low-income families often face significant challenges in education, including lower enrollment rates and higher dropout rates, limiting their academic and future career opportunities. These findings underscored the critical impact of socio-economic status on a child's academic success and the necessity of addressing these disparities to improve outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Table 12. *Number of Siblings (n = 40)*

Number Of Siblings		Gender				Total	
		Male		Female			
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Number Of Siblings	0-2	13	32.50	12	30.00	25	62.50
	3-4	8	20.00	3	7.50	11	27.50
	5-6	3	7.50	0	0.00	3	7.50
	7-8	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
	9-12	1	2.50	0	0.00	1	2.50
	Total	25	62.50	15	37.50	40	100.00

The table highlighted the number of siblings among learners with learning difficulties (LDs) or specific learning disabilities (SLDs). Most respondents, 62.5%, had 0–2 siblings, followed by 27.5% with 3–4 siblings. A smaller proportion, 7.5%, had 5–6 siblings, and only 2.5% fell under the 9–12 siblings' category. These figures suggested that most pupil-respondents came from smaller families with fewer siblings. Research by Conley and Glauber (2005) emphasized that the relationship between the number of siblings and children's education can vary. While larger family sizes may pose challenges for resource allocation, smaller families often allow for greater focus on individual children's educational needs. This aligns with the current findings, where a majority of the respondents from smaller families may potentially benefit from more parental attention and support.

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Table 13. *Memory*

Memory *(The learners' ability to remember facts or what he/she has experienced)*	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
1. Difficulty remembering information about personal data, such as date of birth, home address etc.	3.08	0.52	Sometimes
2. Difficulty remembering the names of weekdays, months, and seasons.	3.18	0.63	Sometimes
3. Difficulty learning rhymes, songs, multiplication tables etc. by heart.	3.35	0.57	Always
4. Difficulty remembering long or multiple-step instructions.	3.40	0.62	Always
5. Difficulty acquiring new skills, such as rules of new play or games.	3.15	0.65	Sometimes
Overall	3.23	0.51	Sometimes

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

The table evaluated memory-related challenges among learners, focusing on their ability to recall information and follow instructions. Learners frequently struggled ("Always") with tasks such as learning rhymes, songs, or multiplication tables (mean score: 3.35) and remembering long or multi-step instructions (mean score: 3.40), indicating significant challenges with procedural memory and retention. Other difficulties occurred occasionally ("Sometimes"), including recalling personal information (mean score: 3.08), identifying weekdays, months, and seasons (mean score: 3.18), and acquiring new skills (mean score: 3.15). The overall mean score of 3.23 suggested intermittent memory challenges across various tasks, highlighting the complexity of memory-related difficulties among learners and the need for targeted interventions to support retention and learning.

Working memory plays a vital role in learning and classroom performance. According to Alloway (2009), it is a stronger predictor of learning ability than intelligence quotient (IQ) scores, as it involves both storing and processing information essential for problem-solving and academic tasks. Deficits in working memory can lead to distractions, limited attention spans, and reduced academic performance, emphasizing the importance of tailored strategies to enhance memory capabilities and educational outcomes.

Table 14. *Comprehension of Spoken Language*

Comprehension Of Spoken Language *(The learner's ability to understand language and speech)*	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
6. Difficulty understanding explanations and instructions	3.53	0.55	Always
7. Difficulty following stories read aloud.	3.55	0.55	Always
8. Difficulty perceiving what other people say (often says "what?"," what do you mean?".	3.55	0.50	Always
9. Difficulty with abstract concepts such as "the day after tomorrow"," in the right order".	3.40	0.66	Always
10. Tends to misinterpret what is said.	3.33	0.61	Always
Overall	3.47	0.49	Always

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

The table assessed learners' comprehension of spoken language and highlighted consistent challenges. Learners frequently struggled ("Always") with understanding instructions (mean score: 3.53), following stories read aloud (3.55), and requiring clarification when processing spoken language (3.55). Persistent difficulties were also observed with abstract concepts like temporal relationships ("the day after tomorrow") and sequential order (3.40), along with misinterpreting spoken information (3.33). The overall mean score of 3.47 indicated prevalent and consistent difficulties in language comprehension across various contexts.

These findings underscore the substantial challenges learners face in understanding spoken language, which impacts their ability to follow instructions, comprehend narratives, and grasp abstract ideas effectively. Tailored interventions are essential to improve language comprehension skills and communication outcomes. According to Prelock et al. (2008), children with developmental language disorder (DLD)—a condition marked by persistent language-learning challenges—often remain untreated, missing the specialized support necessary for success. This lack of intervention poses long-term risks to their academic and social outcomes.

Table 15. Expressive Language

Expressive Language *(The student's ability of language expression and to pronounce words)*	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
11. Uncertain of speech sounds and tends to misarticulate words.	3.43	0.63	Sometimes
12. Difficulty learning the names of colors, people, letters etc.	2.88	0.68	Sometimes
13. Difficulty explaining what he/she wants.	3.33	0.69	Always
14. Difficulty expressing him/herself in whole sentences, in grammatically correct sentences, or inflecting words.	3.50	0.59	Always
15. Having a limited vocabulary compared to learners the same age and trouble finding the right words.	3.60	0.62	Always
Overall	3.49	0.53	Always

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

The table assessed students' expressive language abilities, revealing consistent and significant challenges. Students frequently struggled ("Always") with expressing their wants (mean score: 3.33), using grammatically correct sentences (3.50), and having a limited vocabulary that made finding the right words difficult (3.60). These persistent issues indicated pervasive difficulties in articulating thoughts clearly. Additionally, phonological processing and speech production challenges were noted, as students often misarticulated words and demonstrated uncertain speech sounds (3.43).

Occasional difficulties were observed in learning names of colors, people, and letters (2.88). The overall mean score of 3.49 highlighted that expressive language challenges were predominantly persistent across multiple areas. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions to enhance vocabulary, grammar, articulation, and phonological skills.

Table 16. *Verbal Communication*

Verbal Communication *(The learner`s ability to use language and ability to communicate with others)*	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
16. Difficulty telling about experiences or situations so that the listener understands (e.g., what happened during the day or during the summer vacation.)	3.53	0.71	Always
17. Difficulty keeping" on track" when telling other people something.	3.38	0.70	Always
18. Difficulty taking part in a conversation, e.g., problems shifting from listening to talking.	3.43	0.63	Always
19. Difficulty expressing his/her thoughts.	3.40	0.62	Always
20. Difficulty telling his/her feelings to other people.	3.35	0.65	Always
Overall	3.42	0.57	Always

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

The table evaluated learners' verbal communication skills, highlighting consistent challenges across key dimensions. Learners frequently struggled ("Always") with describing experiences or situations clearly (mean score: 3.53), maintaining coherence in conversations (3.38), and transitioning effectively from listening to speaking in conversations (3.43). Additional difficulties included expressing thoughts (3.40) and conveying emotions (3.35).

The overall mean score of 3.42 emphasized the widespread nature of these communication challenges. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions to improve narrative coherence, conversational strategies, emotional expression, and overall verbal fluency. Enhancing these skills could significantly improve learners' ability to engage in meaningful social interactions and communicate effectively.

Table 17. *Reading*

Acquisition Of Academic Skills In Reading	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
21. Difficulty recognizing letter sounds and words.	3.00	0.74	Sometimes
22. Acquiring reading skills is more difficult than expected considering his/her ability to learn other things.	3.28	0.63	Always
23. Has difficulties to understand what he/she is reading	3.60	0.54	Always
24. Difficulty reading aloud at normal speed (reads too slowly, too quickly, or fails to read fluently)	3.38	0.70	Always
25. Difficulty in spelling.	3.55	0.63	Always
Overall	3.36	0.54	Always

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

The table assessed learners' challenges in acquiring academic reading skills, revealing significant and consistent difficulties. Learners struggled ("Always") with reading comprehension (mean score: 3.60), reading aloud fluently (3.38), and spelling accurately (3.55), highlighting persistent issues in both understanding and technical aspects of reading. Furthermore, learners found acquiring reading skills more difficult than expected given their learning abilities (3.28), indicating a gap between potential and actual performance. Occasionally, learners faced challenges in recognizing letter sounds and words (3.00). The overall mean score of 3.36 emphasized the pervasive nature of reading difficulties across various domains.

Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions focusing on phonics, fluency, comprehension strategies, and spelling to support learners in achieving reading competency. Gedik (2022) emphasized that reading difficulties are often linked to issues such as poor focus, emotional challenges, and problems with word recognition. Strategies such as repeated reading, paired reading, and word repetition have proven effective in enhancing fluency and reducing errors, making them essential tools in improving reading outcomes.

The table 18 evaluated learners' challenges in developing writing skills, revealing persistent difficulties in multiple areas. Learners frequently struggled ("Always") with formulating thoughts into written expression (mean score: 3.63), writing accurately through dictation (3.53), and shaping letters neatly (3.28), indicating challenges in expressive writing and fine motor skills. Additionally, learners occasionally faced difficulties with copying text (3.15) and writing neatly (3.20), albeit to a lesser extent. The overall mean score of 3.36 highlighted the consistent nature of writing difficulties across tasks.

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Table 18. *Writing*

Acquisition Of Academic Skills Writing	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
26. Has difficulties shaping letters and to write neatly.	3.28	0.63	Always
27. Difficulty formulating him/herself in writing	3.63	0.86	Always
28. Difficulty in copying text.	3.15	0.79	Sometimes
29. Difficulty writing words through dictation.	3.53	0.67	Always
30. Difficulty writing neatly.	3.20	0.84	Sometimes
Overall	3.36	0.61	Always

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions in handwriting practice, dictation, organizing thoughts for writing, and improving fine motor coordination. Providing structured support can help learners strengthen their writing skills and effectively communicate through written language in academic and everyday settings. Berninger and Winn (2006) emphasized the complexity of developing writing competence, noting that progression from novice to expert writer requires growth in self-regulation, writing knowledge, and motivation, underscoring the need for comprehensive instructional strategies.

Table 19. *Arithmetic*

Acquisition Of Academic Skills In Arithmetic	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
31. Difficulty acquiring basic math skills (addition, subtraction, i.e., plus, minus)	3.50	0.59	Always
32. Difficulty with math problems given in written form	3.68	0.57	Always
33. Difficulty learning and applying various mathematical rules	3.70	0.56	Always
34. Difficulty with mental arithmetic	3.68	0.57	Always
35.Difficulty applying math concepts in everyday life.	3.60	0.58	Always
Overall	3.63	0.53	Always

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Always; 2.51-3.25-Sometimes; 1.76-2.50-Rarely; 1.00-1.75-Never

The table evaluated learners' challenges in arithmetic, revealing persistent difficulties across various aspects. Learners consistently struggled ("Always") with acquiring basic math skills such as addition and subtraction (mean score: 3.50), solving math problems presented in written form (3.68), and learning and applying mathematical rules (3.70). They also faced significant challenges with mental arithmetic (3.68) and applying math concepts in everyday life (3.60). The overall mean score of 3.63 highlighted the pervasive nature of these difficulties, indicating substantial barriers to understanding and applying mathematical concepts.

Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions emphasizing foundational math skills, problem-solving strategies, understanding mathematical rules, and practical applications of math. Differentiated instruction and structured support can help learners build confidence and proficiency in arithmetic, enabling academic and real-world success. According to Ediyanto et al. (2023), incorporating explicit learning strategies and appropriate media, along with collaboration between special education instructors and math teachers, can significantly enhance math instruction for learners with special needs.

Table 20. *Level of Teachers' Competence in Identifying the SLDs in an Inclusive Education Program*

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Qualitative Description
1. Forgetfulness is a sign of learning disability in children.	3.44	0.61	Strongly Agree
2. Poor attention span is a feature of a child with learning disability.	3.25	0.43	Agree
3. A child with poor handwriting is indicative of learning disability.	3.19	0.53	Agree
4. Difficulty in spelling, reading or understanding what is read is a sign of learning disability.	3.38	0.60	Strongly Agree
5. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties in reading and writing.	3.44	0.70	Strongly Agree
6. Substituting, reversing, omitting or repeating letters and words is a sign of dyslexia.	3.38	0.70	Strongly Agree
7. Inability to recall known words with ease is a sign of dyslexia.	3.50	0.61	Strongly Agree
8. Confusion on words which sound similar, and poor spelling is a signal for dyslexia.	3.38	0.60	Strongly Agree
9. Very poor handwriting is a symptom of dysgraphia.	3.38	0.70	Strongly Agree
10. A struggling writing or very slow/inaccurate copying is a sign of dysgraphia in a child.	3.38	0.60	Strongly Agree
11. Writing with incomplete words or letters, omitting words while writing is a sign of dysgraphia.	3.50	0.50	Strongly Agree
12. An odd position of the body, hand or paper while writing is a sign of dysgraphia.	3.44	0.61	Strongly Agree
13. Mixing up upper and lower cases, using odd sizes or shapes of letters is an indication of dysgraphia.	3.56	0.61	Strongly Agree
14. Having anxiety when performing or thinking about math is a sign for dyscalculia.	3.56	0.61	Strongly Agree
15. Problems retrieving basic facts about arithmetic is a sign of dyscalculia.	3.63	0.60	Strongly Agree
16. Difficulty in solving addition, subtraction, division and multiplication is a sign of dyscalculia.	3.63	0.60	Strongly Agree

17. Difficulty in understanding time-related concepts such as days, weeks etc. is a sign of dyscalculia.	3.63	0.60	Strongly Agree
18. A child with dyscalculia has problem making change and handling money.	3.63	0.60	Strongly Agree
Overall	3.46	0.48	Strongly Agree

Legend: 3.26-4.00-Strongly Agree; 2.51-3.25-Agree 1.76-2.50-Disagree; 1.00-1.75-Strongly Disagree

The table provided an overview of indicators associated with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, as perceived by respondents, highlighting key challenges linked to these learning disabilities. The overall mean score of 3.46 indicated a strong consensus among respondents regarding these signs.

For dyslexia, respondents strongly agreed that difficulties in reading and writing (3.44), substituting, reversing, omitting, or repeating letters and words (3.38), inability to recall words easily (3.50), and confusion with similar-sounding words (3.38) were prominent indicators. General difficulties such as poor attention span (3.25) and poor handwriting (3.19) were also noted.

Dysgraphia, characterized by writing difficulties, was strongly associated with indicators like very poor handwriting (3.38), struggling with writing or copying accurately (3.38), and mixing upper and lower-case letters (3.56). Physical aspects such as body positioning while writing (3.44) further emphasized the unique challenges faced by individuals with dysgraphia.

For dyscalculia, the highest levels of agreement were observed for math-related challenges, such as anxiety around math tasks (3.63), difficulties retrieving arithmetic facts (3.63), solving arithmetic operations (3.63), and understanding time-related concepts (3.63). These issues underscored the profound impact of dyscalculia on daily functioning and academic performance.

The findings highlighted a strong competence among teachers in recognizing general indicators of learning disabilities, with an overall mean score of 3.46. However, many teachers lacked the specific training needed to pinpoint the exact type of learning disability. Despite being general education graduates, their tenure and experience in handling diverse learners enhanced their ability to identify visible signs of learning difficulties. Providing targeted training, materials, and resources—such as Individualized Education Program (IEP) writing—would significantly benefit teachers and improve outcomes for learners with specific learning disabilities. According to Ediyanto et al. (2023), professional development and resources tailored to learning disabilities are essential for fostering inclusive and effective educational environments.

Table 21. *Test of Significant Relationship Between the Profile of Learners and Difficulties in an Inclusive Education*

Inclusive Education	Profile	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)	Decision
Difficulties	Age	11.973a	0.003	Reject Ho
Difficulties	Gender	4.377a	0.112	Accept Ho
Difficulties	Parent Occupation	7.442a	0.827	Accept Ho
Difficulties	Socio Economic Status	8.252a	0.220	Accept Ho
Difficulties	Number of Siblings	2.019a	0.918	Accept Ho

The table presented the results of a chi-square analysis examining the relationship between learner profiles and reported difficulties in inclusive education. Variables analyzed included age, sex, parent occupation, socio-economic status, and the number of siblings.

Age showed a significant relationship with learner difficulties (χ^2 = 11.973, p = 0.003), where 33.3% of cells had an expected count less than 5. This finding rejected the null hypothesis and indicated that age influences the type or severity of challenges encountered in inclusive education. Younger learners may require different support compared to older students, aligning with studies suggesting younger children in the same grade often require more specialized education support (Dhuey & Lipscomb, 2010).

Sex demonstrated no significant relationship with reported difficulties (χ^2 = 4.377, p = 0.112). This result suggested that both male and female learners face similar challenges in inclusive settings, differing from findings that LDs disproportionately affect boys (Mohamad, 2018).

Similarly, parent occupation (χ^2 = 7.442, p = 0.827), socio-economic status (χ^2 = 8.252, p = 0.220), and number of siblings (χ^2 = 2.019, p = 0.918) did not show significant relationships with learning difficulties. These findings suggested that these demographic factors were not critical determinants of the challenges faced by learners in inclusive education.

In conclusion, age emerged as a key factor influencing difficulties in inclusive education, while other demographic variables showed no statistically significant impact. These results highlighted the importance of age-specific interventions to address learning challenges in inclusive settings.

The chi-square analysis examined the relationship between teacher-respondents' profiles and their competence in identifying Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in inclusive education. The results showed no significant relationship between competence and variables such as age (χ^2 = 3.200, p = 0.525), gender (χ^2 = 1.371, p = 0.504), area of specialization (χ^2 = 1.067, p = 0.587), highest educational attainment (χ^2 = 9.029, p = 0.172), and years of teaching experience (χ^2 = 5.429, p = 0.490). These findings indicate that demographic and professional factors do not significantly influence teachers' ability to identify SLD characteristics.

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Table 22. *Test of Significant Relationship Between the Profile of Teacher-Respondents and its Competence in Identifying the Characteristics of SLD*

	Pearson Chi-Square	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided)	Decision
Competence * Age	3.200a	0.525	Accept Ho
Competence * Gender	1.371a	0.504	Accept Ho
Competence * Area of Specialization	1.067a	0.587	Accept Ho
Competence * HEA	9.029a	0.172	Accept Ho
Competence * Years of Teaching	5.429a	0.490	Accept Ho
Competence * Number of Learners with LD and SLD	9.476a	0.050	Reject Ho
Competence * STA	16.082a	0.003	Reject Ho

Legend: HEA-Highest Educational Attainment, STA-Seminars and Trainings Attended

However, significant relationships were found with the number of learners with LD/SLD ($\chi^2 = 9.476$, p = 0.050) and participation in seminars and training ($\chi^2 = 16.082$, p = 0.003). Teachers with more experience handling students with LD/SLD demonstrated greater competence, likely due to practical exposure. Similarly, attending relevant seminars and training significantly enhanced their ability to identify SLD characteristics. This highlights the importance of professional development and practical experience in strengthening teachers' competence in inclusive education settings. As Kini and Podolsky (2016) noted, experienced and well-trained teachers positively impact student outcomes and contribute to a supportive learning environment.

Conclusions

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

Most teacher-respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50, predominantly female, with only master's units completed, significant teaching experience, and moderate participation in seminars and training. While they possessed sufficient experience in inclusive education, there is a pressing need for continued education and participation in specialized seminars to enhance their skills in supporting learners with special needs.

The majority of pupil-respondents were males aged 5-8 who struggled primarily with arithmetic and mathematical reasoning. These learners came from economically disadvantaged families, with parents working in low-income occupations. Despite having relatively few siblings, economic constraints hindered their access to medical or professional care to address their learning difficulties adequately.

Widespread and consistent challenges were observed among learners in memory retention, comprehension of spoken language, expressive language, verbal communication, and the acquisition of academic skills, particularly reading, writing, and arithmetic. These persistent difficulties underscore the necessity for targeted interventions to support these learners.

The study also concluded that teacher-respondents demonstrated a high mean score in their competence to identify characteristics of learning disabilities in inclusive education settings. However, this competence was largely attributed to experience rather than formal training. Proper training and professional development are essential to refine their ability to assess and address these challenges effectively.

Age emerged as a significant factor influencing the difficulties learners faced in inclusive education, while variables such as gender, parent occupation, socioeconomic status, and number of siblings did not show a significant impact. Therefore, age-appropriate interventions should be prioritized to address learners' challenges effectively.

Finally, the relationship between teacher-respondents' profiles and their competence in detecting characteristics of learning disabilities showed that demographic factors such as age, gender, area of specialization, highest educational attainment, and years of teaching experience had no significant impact. However, participation in training and seminars significantly influenced competence, reinforcing the importance of professional development for teachers working in inclusive education.

In summary, the majority of teacher-respondents were experienced educators providing inclusive education to a significant number of learners with SLDs. While they could identify disparities in learners, they lacked the necessary training to assess and address these challenges adequately. Teachers require specialized training and seminars to develop effective strategies and interventions.

Most pupil-respondents exhibiting SLD characteristics were boys who faced challenges in memory, language skills, communication, and academic abilities, particularly in mathematics. Their economic disadvantages further limited access to proper assessments and interventions. The study emphasized the importance of age-appropriate activities and targeted interventions to support learners in developing fundamental skills and succeeding in inclusive education settings.

Based on the study's conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed for the Lila Central Elementary School Cluster, District of Lila, Bohol Division:

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Conduct specialized training and seminars for teacher-respondents focused on assessing learners with suspected learning difficulties,

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implementing effective teaching techniques, managing these learners, preparing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and developing instructional tools tailored to their needs.

Encourage teachers to pursue professional development opportunities such as enrolling in advanced degree programs or specialized courses to enhance their competence in working with learners with special needs.

Provide master teachers with the responsibility to evaluate age-appropriate exercises and instructional materials to ensure their quality and effectiveness in improving skills such as memory, language, arithmetic, writing, and reading.

Student-Focused Interventions

Develop and implement programs specifically targeting dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia to address these challenges early, ideally before students transition to high school.

Design age-appropriate interventions and exercises to strengthen critical academic and communication skills, with a particular emphasis on reading as a foundational skill for overall learning.

Parental Support and Community Involvement

Collaborate with the local government unit (LGU) to establish livelihood programs or provide stable employment opportunities for parents of students with learning disabilities, ensuring they can meet their children's medical and educational needs.

Promote awareness and engagement among parents to foster a supportive environment at home for learners with special needs.

Infrastructure Development

Advocate for the establishment of special education facilities within the school to provide targeted support and resources for learners with specific learning disabilities, ensuring equal opportunities for academic growth alongside their peers.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Implement the proposed intervention plan and establish a team to assess its effectiveness regularly, identify areas for improvement, and ensure continuous enhancement of teaching and support strategies.

These recommendations aim to create a holistic approach that supports teachers, students, and families, ultimately fostering an inclusive and effective learning environment for all.

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