



The Teacher-Parent Collaboration On the Success of Individualized Education Plans for Students with Special Needs: Teachers' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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Teacher-parent collaboration plays a vital role in the successful implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), which are essential for supporting students with special needs in inclusive education settings. This descriptive qualitative research explored the collaboration between teachers and parents in the implementation of IEPs in a public elementary school in Batangas City, Philippines. The study aimed to describe existing IEP practices, identify the roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents, and determine common challenges such as attendance

of IEP team members, progress monitoring, and communication between home and school, and develop a guidebook to support effective implementation. Using purposive sampling, five special education teachers were selected and interviewed



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using a validated semi-structured guide. The data gathered were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed that the implementation of IEPs in the study setting is largely teacher-led, with teachers assuming primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and monitoring IEPs due to limited institutional and professional support. Parental involvement was found to be inconsistent and largely consultative, with parents often informed of IEP decisions rather than actively participating in goal-setting and evaluation. The study further identified context-specific challenges, including the absence of a complete multidisciplinary IEP team, reliance on teacher-developed tools for progress monitoring, and communication that is functional but irregular. In response to these findings, a practical guidebook was developed to address identified gaps by clarifying teacher and parent roles, strengthening communication practices, and supporting more structured collaboration in resource-limited public school contexts. The findings highlight that effective IEP implementation depends not only on collaboration in principle, but on clear, sustained, and contextually appropriate collaboration between teachers and parents.

INTRODUCTION

Students with special needs are those who need extra help because of different difficulties influencing their physical, mental, emotional, or social development. These needs could result from disabilities, learning difficulties, developmental delays, or other medical conditions influencing their educational experience. Students with special needs are placed in an educational environment meant to give them the correct support to enable their success in the classroom. Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is an important part of this setup. With further support catered to their needs, schools aim to create an environment where these students may learn and succeed just as other students. An IEP is a personalized learning plan for a student with special needs. It outlines the student's goals, services, and accommodations to help them succeed during their school years. Creating an Individualized Education Plan (IEPs) for students can be quite challenging for both teachers and parents. This difficulty arises because every learner has unique needs that require specific support and planning. Ensuring that each student receives the precise assistance they need is crucial. Without a suitable IEP tailored to each student, the learning process can become ineffective and stagnant, failing to meet the educational needs of every learner adequately. Thus, the task demands careful attention to detail and a deep understanding of each student's requirements to foster meaningful educational progress.

In Australia, several barriers affect the effective implementation of

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with special needs. Many teachers report feeling underprepared to implement IEPs effectively due to limited training in inclusive education strategies (Fox et al., 2021). Many schools face funding shortages, limiting the resources available to support students with special needs. Teachers often express that the demands of preparing individualized lesson plans and assessments are too time-consuming (Duncan et al., 2021). Collaboration between teachers, parents, and specialists is crucial for developing effective IEPs.

However, miscommunication or differing expectations between stakeholders can hinder the creation of comprehensive and effective plans (Allam & Martin, 2021). Having a shared understanding of a child's educational goals is hampered by parental involvement and the cooperation of parents and teachers in IEPs. Parents' lack of communication with school personnel, their ignorance of special education procedures, and their passive attendance at IEP meetings are some of the obstacles. Parents' ability to collaborate with staff in the implementation of programs in the classroom and to influence decisions regarding the IEP process are both impacted by these obstacles (Hebel, 2021). IEPs help students with special needs reach their full potential. They provide tailored support and resources to address their unique learning needs. Developing a detailed IEP requires a lot of time and effort for both teachers and parents to meet the learner's unique needs. It is hard to set realistic goals that are challenging yet achievable for learners without putting them under too much pressure. As the student grows and develops, the IEP must be regularly updated, necessitating ongoing commitment and collaboration from both parents and teachers. These plans could not be done without the teamwork of the teacher, parents, and the learners themselves. IEPs are like a personalized roadmap for learners with special needs. It also tracks the student's progress and makes adjustments when needed. In the Philippines, the implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) faces several challenges that hinder their effectiveness for students with special needs.

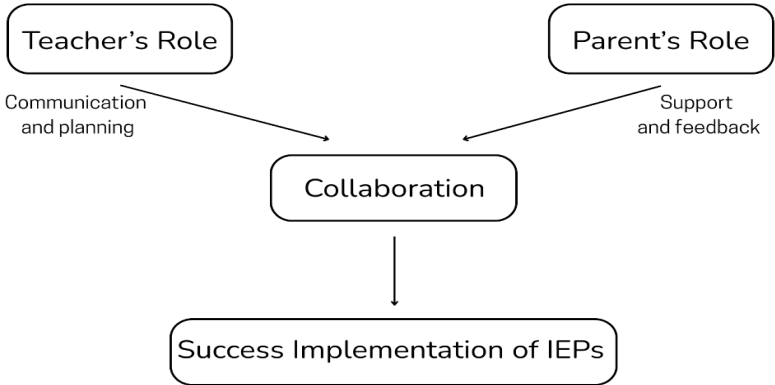
According to the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No.044, Series of 2021, one of the major problems is the shortage of trained SPED teachers. An effective collaboration between parents and educators is critical for IEP success, but this can be difficult to achieve. Additionally, social stigma surrounding disabilities remains a challenge in some areas. This can discourage parents from seeking the appropriate educational interventions for their children. According to UNESCO, IEP is a record that aids educators in monitoring pupils' advancement with respect to personalized learning objectives. The teacher should finish it in close consultation with the child's parents and, to the greatest extent feasible, the student. When there are several adults teaching a child in

a school (such as co-teachers or subject teachers), they should collaborate to make sure the IEP is thoroughly reviewed and adhered to. When it comes to the development and overall autonomy of children with disabilities, the IEP can also support the adoption of a holistic approach that connects social, educational, and rehabilitative aspects. Individual education plans (IEPs) are clearly beneficial for students, parents, and special education teachers.

Students with disabilities must participate in addition to development teamwork and implementation. The integrative nature of the individualized education program (IEP) development must be acknowledged. This necessitates taking into account a number of elements when creating a student plan, including the student’s concerns, the parents’ concerns, the teacher’s observations, and the special educator’s observations. Each piece of information needs to be compiled into a single document that serves as a guide for the student’s educational journey. To make sure the document’s objectives are being fulfilled, the IEP must be updated frequently to reflect new assessment information and be tailored to each student’s strengths and needs.

FRAMEWORK

Figure 1
Collaborative Partnership Framework for the Success of Individualized Education Plans



Collaborative Partnership Framework for the Success of Individualized Education Plans

This study was anchored in the Family-Professional Partnerships Theory. According to the Walker et al. (2022), the concept of collaboration between educators and families is crucial, as strong partnerships between teachers and parents are the direct pathway to improved student outcomes and ensure that Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) effectively address students' unique needs. The framework underscoring this study defines the distinct yet complementary responsibilities necessary for effective collaboration. Specifically, the Teacher's Role is centered on Communication and planning, while the Parent's Role is focused on providing essential Support and feedback. This integrated approach is presented as the essential structure driving the Success Implementation of IEPs. This theory suggests that the collaboration between teachers and parents not only fosters mutual trust but also empowers families to contribute meaningfully to the educational planning process, ensuring the IEP is responsive and relevant to the student's whole life. Through defined responsibilities and cooperative strategies, both teachers and parents work together to create and implement effective IEPs that align directly with the student's specific needs. In this context, the integration of this theoretical framework underscores the value of family-professional collaboration in the IEP process, ultimately aiming to enhance educational outcomes and foster a supportive environment for learners with special needs.

The Conceptual Paradigm illustrates that Collaboration is the bridge that connects the efforts of the teacher and the parent. Teachers contribute their professional expertise through Communication and planning, while parents provide personal knowledge and critical data through Support and feedback about the child. Together, their shared efforts lead directly to the Success Implementation of IEPs. By focusing on these defined inputs, teachers and parents can overcome challenges and ensure that students with special needs receive the consistent care and guidance they deserve. This framework emphasizes collaboration, teamwork, and the belief that the success of a child's education depends fundamentally on both school and home working together in partnership.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to (1) describe the existing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) implemented for students with special needs. Based on the experiences shared by the respondents, their insights regarding the process and collaboration served as the basis (2) to identify the specific roles and responsibilities of

teachers and parents in the implementation of IEPs. After careful analysis of the gathered data, the research further sought (3) to determine the common challenges encountered in the IEP process, particularly in terms of IEP team members' attendance, monitoring and progress tracking, and parent-teacher communication. Finally, the study aimed (4) to develop a guidebook that supports teachers and parents in strengthening their collaboration, ensuring a more effective, inclusive, and systematic implementation of Individualized Education Plans for students with special needs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and describe the perspectives, experiences, and challenges encountered in teacher-parent collaboration during the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The descriptive qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a clear and systematic description of participants' perspectives and practices within their natural educational context, without manipulation of variables. This design enabled the researcher to gather detailed narratives from teachers directly involved in the IEP process, providing a holistic understanding of how collaboration with parents occurs in practice. Furthermore, this design is appropriate for educational settings, particularly in studies that aim to uncover authentic experiences, perceptions, and meanings that participants attribute to a specific phenomenon.

Participants

The study utilized a purposive sampling technique to identify and select participants who could provide the most relevant and meaningful data related to the research objectives. Five (5) special education (SPED) teachers currently teaching students with special needs in a public elementary school in Batangas City, Philippines, were chosen as participants. These teachers were directly involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of IEPs, as well as in communication and collaboration with parents. The purposive sampling method was used to ensure that participants had firsthand experience with teacher-parent collaboration in IEP implementation, thereby contributing rich and detailed insights.

To ensure the suitability of the participants, only licensed teachers assigned to SPED classrooms and with at least one (1) year of experience handling learners with special needs were included in the study. All participants had firsthand experience in participating in IEP-related activities and collaborating

with parents, which enabled them to provide informed perspectives on the implementation process. While the teachers varied in terms of years of teaching experience and educational background in special education, these factors were not treated as variables for comparison. Instead, they were considered contextual characteristics that enriched the data and contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of teacher-parent collaboration in IEP implementation.

Instrumentation

The primary research instrument used in this study was a validated semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide was developed by the researcher to obtain comprehensive information on IEP practices, teacher and parent roles, and the challenges encountered in collaboration—particularly concerning IEP team attendance, progress monitoring, and communication. The questions were open-ended to allow participants to freely express their thoughts, experiences, and insights without restrictions, thereby promoting richer data collection.

To ensure the instrument's validity and reliability, the interview guide was subjected to expert validation by professionals in the field of Special Needs Education and educational research. The validators reviewed the guide for content clarity, question relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. Their suggestions were carefully incorporated before its administration. The final version of the interview guide served as the main tool for gathering data that accurately reflected the experiences and perspectives of SPED teachers regarding teacher-parent collaboration in IEP implementation.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher personally approached the identified SPED teacher-participants to provide an overview of the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical safeguards. Informed consent forms were distributed, ensuring that participants fully understood their rights, including the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequences.

The interviews were conducted individually at a time and place convenient for the participants to ensure comfort and openness during the discussion. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participants' permission to guarantee accuracy. Field notes were also taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. After the interviews, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher to ensure that the data remained authentic and true to the participants' responses. The transcriptions were later used as the primary source for data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher strictly adhered to established ethical standards in conducting this study. Participants were informed about the nature, purpose, and objectives of the research prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by assigning pseudonyms to participants and excluding any identifying information about them or their school in the report. Participants were also reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher committed to storing all collected data securely and using it solely for academic purposes. These measures were undertaken to uphold the integrity of the research and protect the rights and welfare of the participants throughout the study process.

Data Analysis and Guidebook Development

The data collected from the transcribed interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. This process involved reading the transcripts repeatedly to gain familiarity, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The themes were aligned with the specific research questions to describe existing practices, identify roles, and determine common challenges.

The findings from the thematic analysis served as the empirical basis for the development of the Guidebook for Parents and Teachers' Effective IEP Implementation. The guidebook was developed based on the identified gaps and challenges, integrating the perspectives and practical suggestions gathered from the SPED teachers. The initial draft of the guidebook was subjected to content and instructional material validation by experts in curriculum design and special education to ensure its usefulness, clarity, and relevance as a practical resource for the target users (teachers and parents). The final guidebook was then presented as the practical output of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Existing Individualized Education Plan

Theme	Sub-themes	Illustrative Examples
Nature of Existing IEPs	Teacher-driven	“Because we don’t always have specialists or parents, we usually plan and implement it ourselves.”
	Goal-oriented	“Each IEP has clear goals for the student, like improving reading or social interaction.”
	Detailed tracking	“It records the student’s strengths, areas for improvement, interventions, and progress.”

IEP is a working document, not a standardized form. Teachers view the IEP primarily as a working document that guides the individualized instruction for students, rather than a rigid, standardized form. Its core purpose is to be a flexible tool that addresses the child’s unique needs.

Teacher-driven. The data reveal that IEP development and implementation are primarily led by teachers, often due to the absence or limited availability of specialists and inconsistent parent participation. One teacher shared, “*Because we don’t always have specialists or parents, we usually plan and implement it ourselves.*” This finding highlights how teachers assume multiple roles in the IEP process, from assessment and planning to implementation and monitoring.

This result aligns with previous studies emphasizing that teachers frequently carry the main responsibility for IEP development in inclusive settings. Allam and Martin (2021) reported that special education teachers often work independently due to shortages of trained personnel and time constraints. Similarly, Concepcion et al. (2025) found that teachers play a central role in translating policy-mandated IEP requirements into classroom-based practices, particularly in resource-limited contexts. In the Philippine setting, DepEd Order No. 044, s. 2021 underscores the importance of a multidisciplinary IEP team; however, the present findings suggest a gap between policy and actual practice, where teachers compensate for limited team collaboration by taking full ownership of the IEP process.

Goal-oriented IEPs. Teachers emphasized that each IEP is designed with specific and measurable goals tailored to the learner’s academic and functional needs. As one participant stated, “*Each IEP has clear goals for the student, like improving reading or social interaction.*” These goals serve as the foundation for instructional decisions and intervention strategies.

This finding is consistent with Cleveland and Markham (2024), who

emphasized that IEP goals must be grounded in assessment data to ensure relevance and measurability. Their study highlights that goal-setting is a central component of effective IEPs, as it links identified needs to targeted interventions. Likewise, UNESCO (2021) stressed that individualized goals are essential in inclusive education to address learners' diverse abilities and promote equitable learning opportunities. The emphasis on goal-oriented planning in this study reflects teachers' efforts to make IEPs functional and responsive to learner needs, even in the absence of full team support.

Detailed tracking. Documenting strengths, areas for improvement, interventions, and outcomes. One teacher explained, "*It records the student's strengths, areas for improvement, interventions, and progress.*" Teachers view the IEP as both a legal and instructional document that supports continuous monitoring and instructional adjustment.

This aligns with AbleSpace (2023), which highlighted the importance of systematic IEP data collection in monitoring student progress and informing instructional decisions. Detailed documentation allows teachers to evaluate whether interventions are effective and make timely modifications. Furthermore, Lambrecht et al. (2020) emphasized that well-documented IEPs support accountability and consistency in inclusive education implementation. Although collaboration among team members may be limited, the detailed tracking reflected in the teachers' accounts demonstrates their commitment to evidence-based practice and learner-centered instruction.

Table 2
Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Parents

Theme	Sub-themes	Illustrative Examples
Teacher Roles	Instructional Planner	“We prepare the goals, strategies, and activities based on the child’s needs.”
	Daily implementer	“We are the ones implementing the IEP daily and adjusting it based on performance.”
Teacher Responsibilities	Monitoring and documentation	“We monitor progress and update the IEP when there is improvement or concern.”
Parent Roles	Informant about child’s behavior	“We ask parents about the child’s behavior at home.”
Parent Responsibilities	Attendance in IEP meetings	“Some parents cannot attend meetings due to work.”
	Home-based support	“We give activities to do at home, but not all parents follow.”

The effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) depends on the clearly defined and complementary roles of teachers and parents. Findings from this study indicate that teachers perform multiple, interrelated roles in IEP implementation, while parental participation varies in consistency and depth.

Teacher Roles

Instructional Planner. Teachers are primarily responsible for planning the instructional goals, strategies, and activities outlined in the IEP. One teacher shared, “*We prepare the goals, strategies, and activities based on the child’s needs.*” Another noted, “*We are the ones who implement it every day. We don’t just follow the IEP—we revise and adjust depending on how the child performs.*” This statement illustrates a responsive and hands-on approach, where the teacher continuously modifies instructional strategies and goals based on observation and learner performance. This highlights that teachers function as both planners and implementers, bridging the gap between documentation and instructional delivery. It is evident that teachers take on a central and multifaceted role in the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), especially in public school settings where access to a full support team is limited or entirely unavailable.

This finding aligns with Concepcion et al. (2025), who emphasized that special education teachers serve as the primary architects of IEPs, particularly in contexts where multidisciplinary teams are limited. Cleveland and Markham

(2024) also underscored that teachers play a crucial role in aligning assessment results with measurable and functional goals. The present study reinforces these findings by showing that teachers rely heavily on classroom observations and assessments to design responsive and learner-centered plans.

Daily Implementer. Beyond planning, teachers act as the daily implementers of the IEP. One participant explained, “*We are the ones implementing the IEP daily and adjusting it based on performance.*” This reflects a dynamic process where teachers continuously adapt instruction based on learner progress.

This role is consistent with findings by Duncan et al. (2021), who reported that teachers in inclusive settings frequently adjust instructional strategies in real time to meet diverse learner needs. Similarly, Fox et al. (2021) identified time constraints and limited support as factors that require teachers to rely on flexible, classroom-based decision-making. The teachers in this study demonstrate instructional adaptability, ensuring that IEPs remain functional rather than static documents.

Teacher Responsibility

Monitoring and Documentation. Monitoring learner progress and documenting outcomes emerged as a key teacher responsibility. As one teacher stated, “*We monitor progress and update the IEP when there is improvement or concern.*” Teachers view documentation as essential for evaluating learner growth and guiding instructional decisions.

This finding is supported by AbleSpace (2023), which emphasized that systematic data collection is fundamental to effective IEP implementation, allowing teachers to identify progress trends and make evidence-based adjustments. Lambrecht et al. (2020) further noted that consistent documentation strengthens accountability and supports coordinated implementation of inclusive practices. The present study confirms that teachers recognize documentation as both a legal obligation and an instructional necessity.

Parent Roles

Informant about the Child’s Behavior. Parents play an important role as informants, particularly in providing insights into the child’s behavior and functioning at home. As one teacher shared, “*We ask parents about the child’s behavior at home.*” Such information allows teachers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the learner that extends beyond classroom observations. Parents’ firsthand knowledge of their child’s routines, communication patterns, emotional responses, and behavior in natural settings provides valuable contextual data that cannot be captured through school-based assessments alone.

This aligns with Walker et al. (2022), who emphasized that parental input provides valuable contextual information that informs goal-setting and intervention planning. Hyassat et al. (2024) also highlighted that parents' observations at home contribute to a more holistic understanding of the child's needs. The findings of this study affirm that teachers value parental insights, even when parental participation in other areas is limited.

Parent Responsibilities

Attendance in IEP Meetings. Attendance in IEP meetings is a key parental responsibility; however, teachers reported frequent challenges in this area. One teacher shared, *“Some parents cannot attend meetings due to work.”* This reflects practical and structural barriers that limit parents' consistent participation in the IEP process. Work obligations, inflexible schedules, transportation issues, and limited access to leave often prevent parents from attending meetings scheduled during school hours.

This finding is consistent with Hebel (2021) and Alhassan et al. (2025), who identified work demands, limited awareness, and logistical constraints as major barriers to parents' participation in special education processes. CPIR (2025) emphasized that parents are legally recognized members of the IEP team, yet the present study suggests that structural barriers often prevent full engagement, resulting in reduced collaboration.

Home-based Support. Home-based support is another expected parental responsibility; however, teachers reported inconsistent follow-through in this area. As one teacher noted, *“We give activities to do at home, but not all parents follow.”* While some parents actively support their child's learning by assisting with assigned activities and reinforcing school-based interventions, others provide minimal assistance or are unable to sustain regular support. This inconsistency may be influenced by several factors, including parents' limited understanding of IEP goals, lack of confidence in implementing instructional strategies, time constraints due to work and household responsibilities, and uncertainty about how to support children with special needs at home.

Previous research suggests that parents are more likely to engage in home-based activities when they clearly understand the purpose of the tasks and feel adequately guided by teachers (Gaspar & Sahay, 2025; Walker et al., 2022). When such support is lacking, home-based interventions may not be consistently implemented, reducing the continuity between school and home learning environments. Consequently, the effectiveness of IEP goals may be compromised, as learners do not receive the sustained reinforcement necessary for skill development. These findings highlight the need for clearer instructions,

regular follow-up, and parent-friendly guidance to strengthen home–school collaboration and promote more consistent parental involvement in supporting IEP implementation.

Table 3
Common Challenges of Parents and Teachers

Theme	Sub-themes	Illustrative Examples
Systemic and Resource-related Constraints in IEP Implementation	Limited participation of IEP team members	“There’s supposed to be a team, but here, it’s just me and the parent. There’s no OT, no SPED coordinator, no guidance counselor.” “Most of the time, I do the planning and implementation alone because other specialists are not available.”
	Difficulty in systematic monitoring and progress tracking	“We don’t have software or specific progress trackers. We just use our own checklist and notes.” “Tracking progress is hard because everything is manual and we handle many learners at the same time.”
	Increased workload due to multiple roles	“Aside from teaching, we also do the assessments, write the IEP, monitor progress, and talk to parents.” “Sometimes it’s overwhelming because the responsibilities are too many for one teacher.”
Barriers to Active Parental Engagement in the IEP Process	Limited availability and inconsistent participation	“There are times when parents are not present during IEP discussions.” “When we try to explain the IEP, they sometimes say, ‘Teacher, kayo na po bahala.’ It’s hard because we want them to take part.”
	Communication constraints between home and school	“We use Messenger to update parents, send photos and videos, and sometimes call them. But not all respond.” “Some parents reply late or not at all, so follow-up becomes difficult.”
	Difficulty in understanding IEP goals and processes	“Some parents need more explanation because they don’t fully understand the goals written in the IEP.” “We need to explain the plan many times before parents become comfortable with it.”

The findings reveal that both teachers and parents encounter significant challenges in the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). These challenges stem from systemic and resource-related constraints within

schools, as well as barriers that limit active parental engagement.

Systemic and Resource-related Constraints in IEP Implementation

Limited participation of IEP team members. Teachers consistently reported that IEP implementation is often carried out without the full participation of a multidisciplinary team. One teacher explained, “*There’s supposed to be a team, but here, it’s just me and the parent. There’s no OT, no SPED coordinator, no guidance counselor.*” Another teacher echoed this concern, stating, “*Most of the time, I do the planning and implementation alone because other specialists are not available.*”

These statements reflect a significant gap between the ideal and actual implementation of IEPs in public school settings. While IEPs are intended to be developed through collaborative input from teachers, parents, and specialists, the absence of key team members places the responsibility of planning, implementation, and evaluation primarily on the teacher. Lambrecht et al. (2020) emphasized that effective individualized education planning relies on shared leadership and multidisciplinary collaboration. However, when such collaboration is limited, teachers are compelled to assume roles beyond their professional training, which may affect the depth and quality of interventions provided.

Hebel (2021) further highlighted that meaningful collaboration in IEP meetings becomes difficult when teachers function as the sole professional authority. This imbalance can limit shared decision-making and reduce opportunities for parents to engage as equal partners. The findings of this study underscore how systemic limitations in staffing and resource allocation compromise the collaborative foundation essential to effective IEP implementation.

Difficulty in systematic monitoring and progress tracking. Another challenge identified by teachers is the difficulty of systematically monitoring and tracking learner progress. One teacher shared, “*We don’t have software or specific progress trackers. We just use our own checklist and notes.*” Another added, “*Tracking progress is hard because everything is manual and we handle many learners at the same time.*”

These responses indicate that teachers rely heavily on informal, teacher-made tools to document learner performance. While this demonstrates adaptability and commitment, the absence of standardized or digital monitoring systems poses challenges to consistency, accuracy, and long-term data use. AbleSpace (2023) emphasized that structured data collection tools are essential for monitoring progress, informing instructional decisions, and revising IEP goals effectively. Without such tools, teachers may struggle to analyze trends and make timely instructional adjustments.

Additionally, teachers noted that heavy workloads limit their ability to review and interpret collected data. This aligns with findings by Allam and Martin (2021), who reported that excessive administrative demands reduce teachers' capacity to engage in reflective and data-driven practice. As a result, progress monitoring becomes more procedural than analytical, limiting its impact on instructional improvement.

Increased workload due to multiple roles. Teachers also described an increased workload resulting from the multiple roles they perform in IEP implementation. One teacher shared, *"Aside from teaching, we also do the assessments, write the IEP, monitor progress, and talk to parents."* Another added, *"Sometimes it's overwhelming because the responsibilities are too many for one teacher."* These statements illustrate the extent to which teachers function not only as instructors, but also as assessors, planners, documenters, and coordinators—roles that are ideally distributed among a multidisciplinary IEP team.

These statements reflect the cumulative burden placed on teachers in inclusive classrooms. In the absence of adequate staffing and support, teachers take on responsibilities typically distributed among a team of specialists. Fox et al. (2021) noted that excessive workload and role overload are common barriers to effective inclusive education, often leading to stress and burnout. The findings of this study confirm that while teachers remain committed to supporting learners with special needs, the sustainability of such efforts is threatened by systemic constraints.

Barriers to Active Parental Engagement in the IEP Process

Limited availability and inconsistent participation. Limited availability and inconsistent parental participation emerged as a major challenge. Teachers reported that parents are sometimes absent during IEP discussions or defer decision-making to teachers. One teacher shared, *"There are times when parents are not present during IEP discussions."* Another stated, *"When we try to explain the IEP, they sometimes say, 'Teacher, kayo na po bahala.' It's hard because we want them to take part."*

These responses suggest that parental participation is often affected by work demands, time constraints, and limited familiarity with the IEP process. Alhassan et al. (2025) identified employment responsibilities and lack of awareness as common barriers to sustained parental involvement. Similarly, CPIR (2025) emphasized that while parents are legally mandated members of the IEP team, practical constraints often limit their participation to formal consent rather than active engagement. This results in teachers assuming greater responsibility for decision-making and implementation.

Communication constraints between home and school. Teachers also reported challenges in maintaining consistent communication with parents. One teacher explained, “*We use Messenger to update parents, send photos and videos, and sometimes call them. But not all respond.*” Another noted, “*Some parents reply late or not at all, so follow-up becomes difficult.*”

These findings reflect teachers’ efforts to use digital platforms to bridge communication gaps. Messaging applications, photos, and video updates have become essential tools for sharing learner progress and maintaining contact with parents. However, inconsistent responses limit the effectiveness of these strategies. Hebel (2021) emphasized that effective teacher–parent collaboration depends on reciprocal communication; when responses are irregular, continuity between home and school interventions is disrupted. Despite teachers’ efforts to share updates and evidence of learner progress through photos and videos, the lack of timely feedback limits opportunities for clarification, reinforcement of strategies at home, and shared problem-solving. This communication gap places additional strain on teachers, who must repeatedly initiate follow-ups, and weakens collaborative decision-making in the IEP process.

Difficulty in understanding IEP goals and processes. Finally, teachers identified parents’ difficulty in understanding IEP goals and processes as a significant barrier. One teacher shared, “*Some parents need more explanation because they don’t fully understand the goals written in the IEP.*” Another added, “*We need to explain the plan many times before parents become comfortable with it.*”

This finding aligns with Gaspar and Sahay (2025), who emphasized that parents’ ability to engage meaningfully in special education depends on their understanding of IEP goals and procedures. When parents lack clarity, they may feel hesitant to ask questions or contribute to decision-making. Teachers in this study recognized the need for repeated explanations and simplified communication to empower parents and strengthen collaboration.

In response to the identified challenges, a Guidebook for Parents and Teachers’ Effective IEP Implementation was developed. This guidebook is a practical resource designed to support both parents and teachers in the collaborative implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs. It provides clear explanations of IEP processes, outlines the roles of each stakeholder, and offers communication tips, progress monitoring tools, sample forms, and real-life strategies. The content is written in simple language and is culturally sensitive to suit a wide range of family backgrounds and school settings.

Many IEPs fall short in practice due to miscommunication, limited collaboration, and lack of understanding among stakeholders. Teachers often

manage most of the implementation, while parents may feel unprepared or uninvolved. This guidebook was developed to address these issues by bridging the knowledge and communication gap between educators and families. By offering accessible guidance, the guidebook aims to strengthen the partnership between home and school, making the IEP process more inclusive, consistent, and responsive to student needs.

The primary beneficiaries of this guidebook are parents and teachers who are directly involved in the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). For parents, the guidebook serves as an empowering tool that helps them understand their role in the IEP process, encouraging active participation and informed decision-making for their child's education. For teachers, it offers practical strategies and resources to enhance collaboration with families, improve goal setting, and effectively monitor student progress. Ultimately, students with special needs will benefit the most, as the strengthened partnership between home and school will ensure that their learning goals are consistently supported. Additionally, school administrators can also utilize this guidebook to promote inclusive practices, train staff, and create a more supportive educational environment for all learners.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in the public elementary school examined is largely teacher-driven, shaped by both professional commitment and systemic constraints. Findings revealed that special education teachers serve as the primary planners, implementers, and monitors of IEPs, often assuming multiple roles due to the absence of a complete multidisciplinary team. While parents are informed about their child's IEP goals and progress, their participation in planning, decision-making, and evaluation remains limited. As a result, collaboration between teachers and parents exists but is often consultative rather than shared, affecting the continuity of support between school and home.

The study further revealed that teachers demonstrate strong adaptability in managing IEP processes despite resource limitations. Teachers rely heavily on classroom-based assessments, observations, and practical documentation strategies to plan and adjust instruction. However, these efforts are constrained by persistent challenges identified in the findings, including incomplete attendance of IEP team members, lack of standardized tools for progress monitoring, and inconsistent communication between teachers and parents. These challenges limit the extent to which IEPs can function as fully collaborative and systematically

monitored plans.

Limited attendance in IEP-related activities—particularly the absence of specialists and inconsistent parental involvement—emerged as a major barrier to effective implementation. Teachers reported that time constraints, competing responsibilities, and limited understanding of the IEP process contribute to parents' reduced engagement. Consequently, teachers often carry the full responsibility for updating and revising IEPs, increasing their workload and placing additional pressure on instructional and administrative tasks. Similarly, the absence of structured monitoring systems results in varied documentation practices, making it difficult to ensure consistency and continuity in tracking learners' progress.

Despite these challenges, the findings highlight the resilience and commitment of SPED teachers, who continuously modify instructional strategies, maintain communication through available platforms, and document learner progress using practical and individualized methods. These practices demonstrate teachers' dedication to ensuring that IEPs remain responsive to learners' needs, even within constrained institutional conditions. However, the study also shows that individual effort alone cannot fully compensate for systemic gaps in collaboration, support, and resources.

Overall, the findings affirm that teacher–parent collaboration is essential for effective IEP implementation, not merely as a procedural requirement but as a shared responsibility that enhances learner outcomes. When collaboration is limited, the IEP risks becoming a teacher-managed document rather than a jointly developed plan that reflects the learner's needs across contexts. Therefore, the study concludes that strengthening IEP implementation requires targeted support mechanisms, including structured parent orientation on IEP roles, institutional support for regular and inclusive IEP meetings, and the provision of clear monitoring frameworks to guide progress tracking. Addressing these areas will help transform the IEP from a largely teacher-led tool into a more collaborative, responsive, and inclusive educational plan for learners with special needs.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The Teacher-Parent Collaboration Guidebook was developed. It outlines simplified IEP procedures, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of teachers and parents, and offers practical strategies for conducting IEP meetings, monitoring learner progress, and sustaining home–school communication. Rather than assuming the availability of a full multidisciplinary team, the guidebook is

intended to support collaboration in settings where teachers often manage most IEP-related tasks and where parents require orientation and guidance to participate more meaningfully.

This guidebook may be utilized by SPED teachers during IEP conferences and parent consultations, and by school administrators as a standard reference for promoting family engagement in inclusive education programs. It can also serve as a training tool for pre-service teachers enrolled in Special Needs Education programs, helping them develop competencies in collaboration and individualized planning.

For further development, schools may adopt and contextualize the guidebook to fit their specific policies, while researchers may conduct pilot testing to evaluate its effectiveness in improving collaboration and student outcomes. Additionally, a digital or interactive version of the guidebook may be produced for wider accessibility. Ultimately, this translational output bridges research and practice, empowering educators and families to work hand in hand toward the shared goal of providing equitable and quality education for learners with special needs.

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