

Validating The Effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans (IEPS): Identifying Opportunities for Improvement

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Abstract – This study evaluated the operational effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) within the selected Senior High Schools (SHS) of the Second District of Leyte, namely Damulaan National High School, Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, Isabel National Comprehensive High School, and Matlang National High School. Utilizing a descriptive-evaluative research design, data were gathered from a balanced, purposive sample of 60 respondents (n = 20 teachers; n=40 students) alongside institutional inputs from school administrators and parents. Data collection was executed using a contextualized, 4-point Likert-scale research instrument assessing three core dimensions: Instructional Adaptation, Goal Attainment, and Transition Planning. The empirical findings revealed an unsatisfactory overall implementation mean (2.27), categorizing the current IEP system as Less Effective. While basic administrative compliance in written examination modifications was met (2.62), severe execution gaps were identified in practical workshop task adaptation (1.95) and post-graduation workforce transition planning (2.05). The primary institutional obstacles identified by local educators included a critical shortage of track-contextualized instructional materials (1.55), absolute scarcity of assistive technologies (1.68), and heavy daily workloads (1.72). Inferential testing (t-test and ANOVA) demonstrated highly significant differences in perceived effectiveness when respondents were grouped by school environment ($t=3.42, p=.001$) and curriculum tracks ($t=2.89, p=.006$), revealing that standardized templates break down within specialized vocational strands such as fisheries and maritime laboratory simulations. Conversely, variance across parents' socio-economic status was not significant ($p=.472$), showing uniform dissatisfaction with transition outcomes across all income brackets. To bridge this systemic compliance-performance gap, the study developed The IEP Optimization Framework, a 10point structural action matrix embedding track-differentiated accommodation protocols, cloudbased progress tracking, and flexible home-school collaborative networks to secure sustainable post-secondary workforce and tertiary readiness for inclusive high school learners.

Keywords: Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Inclusive Education, Transition planning, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track, and the IEP Optimization Framework.

I. INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

The landscape of modern education has shifted from mere integration to authentic inclusion. At the core of this transition is the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a legal and pedagogical document designed to ensure that students with disabilities receive specialized instruction and related services tailored to their unique needs. According to Mitchell (2020), the IEP is the "lynchpin" of special education, serving as both a roadmap for student progress and a safeguard for educational rights. Globally, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education, a mandate that the Philippines has localized through Republic Act No. 11650, which institutes a policy of inclusion and services for learners with disabilities.

However, the mere existence of an IEP does not guarantee success. Research by Shaddock et al. (2021) suggests that many IEPs are treated as administrative formalities rather than dynamic instructional tools. In the Philippine context, particularly within the Department of Education (DepEd), the transition to Senior High School (SHS) introduces a layer of complexity. Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) are no longer just focusing on basic literacy but are preparing for tertiary education or the workforce. This shift necessitates an IEP that is not only robust but also highly adaptable to vocational or academic strands. In the province of Leyte, specifically within the schools of Damulaan NHS, Dr. Geronimo B.

Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, Isabel National Comprehensive School, and Matlang NHS, the implementation of IEPs faces unique geographical and systemic challenges. While the DepEd's Inclusive Education Policy Framework (Order No. 44, s. 2021) provides the "what," the "how" remains inconsistent at the school level.

Teachers in these selected Senior High Schools often find themselves balancing a heavy instructional load with the meticulous requirements of IEP documentation. In many rural or semi-urban settings in Leyte, there is a scarcity of specialized developmental pediatricians or psychologists to provide the clinical assessments that form the basis of a strong IEP. Consequently, educators may rely on subjective observations, leading to goals that are either too vague or developmentally inappropriate. This research is prompted by the observation that while LSENs are enrolled in these SHS programs, their transition outcomes—measured by employability and academic readiness—remain under-evaluated.

The primary "gap" this study addresses is the disconnect between the IEP as a document and the IEP as a practice. Blackwell and Rossetti (2022) argue that for an IEP to be effective, it requires three pillars: collaboration, data-driven goal setting, and consistent monitoring. In the schools under study—such as the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries—the IEP must also account for specialized environments like laboratories and maritime/fishery simulations. If the IEP is not optimized for these specific SHS tracks, the student is essentially "included" in the room but "excluded" from the learning.

Furthermore, parental involvement remains a critical yet underutilized resource in Albueria. Rotter (2019) notes that IEPs often fail because parents are treated as passive recipients of information rather than active partners. By evaluating the current state of IEPs in these four specific schools, this study seeks to identify whether the "opportunities for improvement" lie in teacher

By conducting this evaluation in the specific corridors of Albueria's Senior High Schools, this study transcends theory. It offers a voice to the educators, parents, and students who navigate the complexities of special education in Leyte. The

identification of opportunities for improvement is the first step toward social justice for learners with disabilities.

Theoretical Background

This study is deeply rooted in the philosophy that education is a fundamental human right, necessitating a shift from a "one-size-fits-all" pedagogy to a highly tailored, student-centered approach. To investigate the implementation and efficacy of IEPs within the selected Senior High Schools in Albueria and Isabel,

Leyte, specifically Damulaan National High School, Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, Isabel National Comprehensive School, and Matlang National High School, it is essential to establish a robust theoretical and legal foundation. This discussion serves as the intellectual scaffolding for the development of "The IEP Optimization Framework," bridging abstract educational theories with the concrete mandates of local and international law.

The primary theoretical anchor for this study is *Urie Bronfenbrenner's*

Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Bronfenbrenner posits that a learner's development is not an isolated phenomenon but is shaped by the interaction of various environmental layers. In the context of Senior High Schools in Leyte, the Microsystem is the immediate classroom where the IEP is executed, involving the direct interaction between the student and the teacher at Matlang NHS or Damulaan NHS. The Mesosystem involves the critical partnership between these schools and the families in Albueria. Often, the "effectiveness" of an IEP is compromised not by the document itself, but by a breakdown in this mesosystem, where teachers and parents fail to synchronize their efforts. Furthermore, the Exosystem (DepEd Division of Leyte policies) and the Macrosystem (national laws and societal attitudes toward disability) dictate the resources and cultural support available for inclusion. By utilizing this theory, the research moves beyond viewing the IEP as a static piece of paper and instead treats it as a dynamic element within a complex social ecosystem.

Complementing this is *Lev Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development* (1978), specifically the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky defines the ZPD as the distance between

what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance of a "More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO), such as a specialized teacher at the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries. The IEP is, in essence, a formalized plan for scaffolding, providing the necessary temporary supports to help the student master complex tasks. In the Senior High School (SHS) setting, where students are preparing for either the workforce or higher education, the ZPD becomes increasingly specialized. If an IEP fails to accurately identify a student's ZPD, the instruction becomes either too simplistic (leading to stagnation) or too difficult (leading to frustration). This research evaluates whether the IEPs in the selected schools are effectively serving as Vygotskian scaffolding or if they are merely administrative hurdles that ignore the learner's actual cognitive potential.

To provide a structured methodology for evaluation, the study is further anchored in Daniel Stufflebeam's CIPP Model (Context, Input, Process, Product) (2003). This evaluation framework allows the researcher to dissect the IEP life cycle systematically. Context Evaluation identifies the specific needs of LSEs (Learners with Special Educational Needs) in the unique rural and coastal environments of Albura and Isabel. Input Evaluation scrutinizes the resources, such as teacher training and instructional materials, available at schools like INCS. Process Evaluation focuses on the day-to-day implementation: how often are IEPs reviewed, and is data being used to drive decisions? Finally, Product Evaluation measures the outcomes, determining if the students have achieved their transition goals. The "IEP Optimization Framework" serves as the final "Product" improvement suggested by this evaluative cycle, ensuring that the findings lead to actionable systemic change.

The necessity for effective IEPs is reinforced by a rigorous international legal framework that defines the minimum standards for inclusive education. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), specifically Article 24, mandates that State Parties ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. It emphasizes that persons with disabilities should receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education. This international treaty, which the Philippines ratified, serves as the global moral and legal compass for the study,

asserting that individualized support is not a matter of charity but a fundamental right.

Furthermore, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) of the United States, while a domestic law, has set the global precedent for what constitutes a "high-quality" IEP. IDEA requires that an IEP be "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances," a standard reinforced by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017). This legal standard provides a benchmark for this research: it is not enough for an IEP to exist; it must be ambitious and result in measurable progress. For the SHS students in Leyte, this means the IEP must be robust enough to facilitate a successful transition to post-secondary life, mirroring the "Transition Services" requirements outlined in IDEA.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) remains a foundational document in this discussion. It pioneered the principle that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, or linguistic conditions. The statement specifically advocates for the "individualization of teaching," which is the very essence of the IEP. For the selected schools in Albura, the Salamanca Statement provides the historical and philosophical justification for integrating LSEs into regular SHS strands rather than isolating them in separate facilities.

In the Philippines, the legal landscape has evolved rapidly to support inclusive education, providing a clear mandate for the schools in Leyte to optimize their IEP processes. Republic Act No. 11650, also known as the "Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act" (2022), is the most significant recent legislative milestone. This law mandates that all schools, public and private, must be inclusive and must provide "reasonable accommodations" for learners with disabilities. It explicitly mentions the role of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as the primary tool for ensuring that the unique needs of each learner are met. This research directly aligns with the objectives of RA 11650 by identifying the "opportunities for improvement" that will allow schools like Matlang NHS to comply with this new national mandate.

The Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 44, s. 2021 (Policy Framework on Inclusive Education in Basic Education) provides the operational guidelines for this study. This policy framework outlines the "Key Dimensions of Inclusive Education," which include the learner, the K-12 curriculum, the learning environment, and teacher professional development. The order emphasizes that the curriculum must be "contextualized" for LSENs, a process that is documented through the IEP. For the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, this means tailoring the maritime and fishery curriculum to the specific cognitive or physical abilities of the student. This research evaluates the fidelity of implementation of DepEd Order No. 44 at the school level, seeking to close the gap between policy intent and classroom reality.

Moreover, Republic Act No. 7277, the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons" (1992), and its subsequent amendments (RA 9442), lay the groundwork for the protection and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. Section 12 of this act mandates that the state shall take steps to make education accessible to all disabled persons. The IEP is the legal mechanism through which this "accessibility" is achieved in the classroom. By evaluating IEP effectiveness, this

study ensures that the rights enshrined in the Magna Carta are not merely theoretical but are translated into functional, high-quality instruction for the youth of Albura and Isabel.

The synthesis of these theories and legal bases creates a unified logical framework for the study. Bronfenbrenner's theory explains where the influences on the IEP come from; Vygotsky's theory explains how the instruction should be delivered; and Stufflebeam's model explains how to measure the success of the entire endeavor. These theories provide the "why" and "how" of individualized education, asserting that student success is a byproduct of well-timed support and a supportive environment.

When these theories are viewed through the lens of international (UN CRPD, IDEA) and local (RA 11650, DepEd Order 44) laws, a powerful "CompliancePerformance" dialectic emerges. While the laws mandate the compliance (the existence of the IEP), the theories demand performance (the effectiveness of the IEP). Currently, many schools in the Philippines face a "proceduralism" trap, where IEPs are written to satisfy administrative requirements but fail to influence daily instruction.

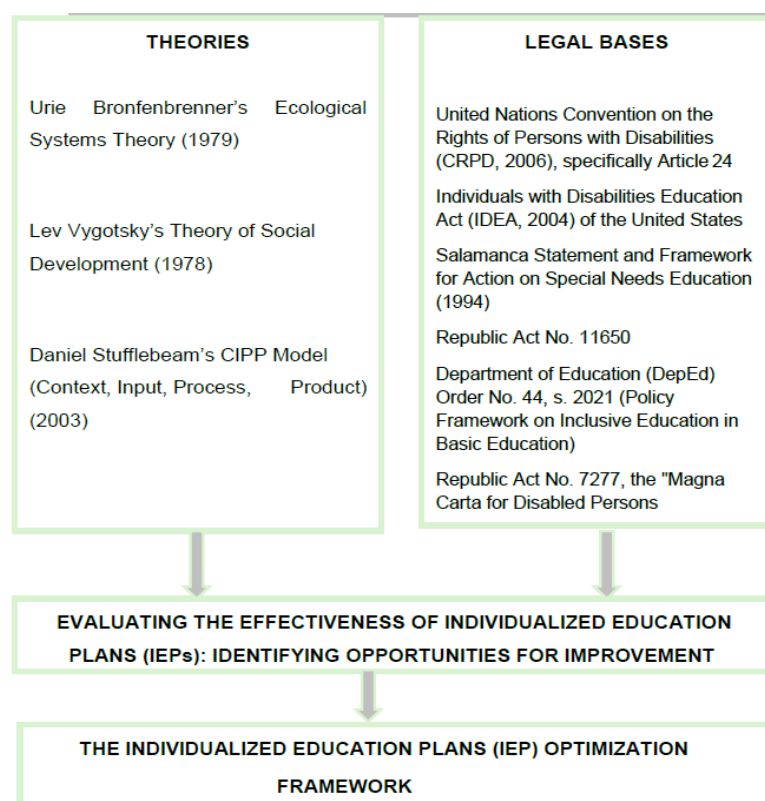


Figure 1 Theoretical / Conceptual Framework of the Study This is particularly critical in Senior High Schools in Leyte, where the stakes are high as students approach adulthood.

The proposed *IEP Optimization Framework*, the primary output of this study, is the missing link in this synthesis. It takes the "Inclusive Education" mandate of RA 11650 and the "Scaffolding" principles of Vygotsky to create a localized, practical tool for teachers in Albura. This framework aims to transform the IEP from a static, bureaucratic document into a dynamic instructional compass. By identifying opportunities for improvement, such as the need for more frequent data-driven reviews, better collaboration between general education and SPED teachers, and more active parental involvement, the research ensures that the legal rights of students are matched by pedagogical excellence.

Ultimately, the theoretical background suggests that an effective IEP is not just a plan for a student with a disability; it is a testament to a school's capacity for flexibility, empathy, and scientific instruction. For Damulaan NHS, Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, INCS, and Matlang NHS, the optimization of the IEP process is the most viable pathway toward achieving the true spirit of "Education for All." Through this lens, the research becomes a critical inquiry into how we can better serve the most vulnerable yet capable members of our educational community in Leyte.

II. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

This study evaluated the operational effectiveness of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) in selected Senior High Schools in the Second District of Leyte: Damulaan National High School, Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, Isabel National Comprehensive School, and Matlang National High School. The findings will serve as the empirical basis for developing "The IEP Optimization Framework."

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Teachers:
 - 1.1.1 educational attainment;
 - 1.1.2 years of teaching experience with LSENs;
 - 1.1.3 Number of relevant trainings/seminars on IEP preparation and implementation attended within the last three years.

- 1.2 School Administrators and SPED Coordinators:

- 1.2.1 Length of administrative service;

- 1.2.2 Type of school;

- 1.3 Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs):

- 1.3.1 age and gender;

- 1.3.2 category of disability (e.g., Learning Disability, ASD,

- Physical Impairment);

- 1.3.3 SHS Track and Strand (Academic, TVL, etc.).

- 1.4 Parents and Guardians:

- 1.4.1 Socio-economic status;

- 1.4.2 Frequency of attendance in IEP-related school meetings.

2. How do the respondents perceive the current effectiveness of the IEP implementation in their respective schools in terms of:

- 2.1 Instructional Adaptation: Modifications of lessons to suit individual learning styles;

- 2.2 Goal Attainment: The rate at which the "Measurable Annual Goals" in the IEP are actually achieved by the students;

- 2.3 Transition Planning: The alignment of the IEP with the student's postgraduation goals (e.g. employment, higher education, or independent living).

3. What are the barriers and challenges encountered by teachers and administrators in the selected Senior High Schools regarding:

- 3.1 Collaboration among the multidisciplinary team;

- 3.2 Availability of assistive technology and specialized instructional Materials, and

- 3.3 Time constraints in monitoring and documentation.

4. Is there a significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of IEP

- Implementation when the respondents are grouped according to their demographic profiles?

5. Based on the identified opportunities for improvement and gaps in current practice, what specific strategies and components should be integrated into the proposed IEP Optimization Framework to enhance educational outcomes for LSENs in the selected Senior High Schools?

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies in its potential to transform the educational experience of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) within the specific socio-geographic landscape of Albura and

Isabel, Leyte. By moving beyond a "compliance-only" view of special education, this study provides a critical evaluation that ensures the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) serves its true purpose: a catalyst for student independence. The findings of this study, culminating in "The IEP Optimization Framework," will be of significant value to the following stakeholders:

Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs).

The primary beneficiaries of this study are the students themselves at Damulaan NHS, Matlang NHS, INCS, and Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries. For these learners, the study signifies a shift toward a more responsive and ambitious education. By identifying gaps in their current IEPs, the study ensures that their individual goals are not just documented but achieved, ultimately improving their readiness for the workforce or higher education and ensuring their right to a "Free Appropriate Public Education" (FAPE) is fully realized.

Senior High School Teachers (SPED and General Education). Teachers in the selected schools often face the daunting task of adapting complex SHS strands (such as Maritime, Fisheries, or Academic tracks) for diverse learners. This study provides them with a clear "Optimization Framework" that streamlines the IEP process. It offers evidence-based strategies to reduce administrative burden while increasing instructional impact, helping Teachers Bridge the gap between theoretical inclusion and practical classroom application.

School Administrators and SPED Coordinators. For the leadership within the Albuera and Isabel districts, this research serves as a diagnostic tool. It provides data on the current strengths and weaknesses of their inclusive programs. The proposed framework offers a standardized roadmap for monitoring and evaluation, allowing administrators to allocate resources more effectively, whether that means investing in specific assistive technologies or providing targeted professional development for their staff.

Parents and Guardians. This study empowers parents by clarifying their role within the multidisciplinary team. By highlighting the need for collaborative goalsetting, the research encourages a more transparent and active partnership between the home and the school. Parents gain a better understanding of what an "effective" IEP looks like,

enabling them to advocate more successfully for their child's specific needs and future transitions.

Department of Education (DepEd) and Policy Makers. On a broader scale, the results of this study contribute to the localized implementation of Republic Act No. 11650 and DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021. The "IEP Optimization Framework" can serve as a pilot model for other schools in the Division of Leyte and beyond. It provides policy makers with empirical evidence on how inclusive education policies translate to the ground level, particularly in rural and specialized vocational settings.

Future Researchers. Finally, this study adds to the growing body of literature on inclusive education in the Philippine context. It provides a foundational evaluation of IEP effectiveness at the Senior High School level—a critical yet often under-researched stage of the K-12 system. Future researchers can use the findings and the developed framework as a baseline for longitudinal studies or as a comparative point for research in other regions.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes a Quantitative Research Methodology to systematically investigate the efficacy of IEPs across the four selected Senior High Schools. This methodology is particularly effective for this research because it allows for the collection of standardized data from a diverse group of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and parents. By quantifying perceptions of "effectiveness" and the frequency of "implementation gaps," the researcher can provide an objective, statistical basis for the proposed improvements. This approach is essential in a multi-school setting (Damulaan NHS, Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, INCS, and Matlang NHS) to ensure that the findings are representative of the district's broader educational landscape and can be generalized to inform the development of a unified framework.

Research Design

The most appropriate design for this investigation is the Descriptive/Evaluative Research Design. This design is uniquely suited for answering the Statement of the Problem (SOP) because it transcends mere description to offer a critical assessment of value. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive research is used to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon, while

evaluative research is used to determine the merit, worth, or value of a program or policy against a set of standards.

In this study, the Descriptive component profiles the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the current status of IEP procedures in the Leyte schools. The Evaluative component then measures these findings against the mandates of Republic Act No. 11650 and DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021. This dual-purpose design is the most appropriate because it allows the researcher to first define "what is" (the current IEP state) and then determine "what should be" (the opportunities for improvement), thereby providing a logical justification for the creation of the IEP Optimization Framework.

Flow of the Study

The flow of the study is visualized through the Input-Process-Output (IPO) Model, which illustrates the logical progression from the initial conceptualization to the final completion of the study's intended output.

The Input phase represents the "raw materials" of the research. This includes the Demographic Profiles of the respondents (teachers' expertise, administrators' experience, and LSENs' specific disability categories), as well as the Existing IEP Documents and the Regulatory Standards set by the Department of Education. Furthermore, the inputs include the raw scores from the survey instruments regarding instructional adaptation, goal achievement, and transition readiness. These variables provide the

necessary context to understand the specific needs of the Senior High Schools in Albueria and Isabel.

The Process phase involves the actual transformation of these inputs into meaningful data. This begins with the Distribution and Retrieval of validated survey questionnaires across the four target schools. Once gathered, the data undergoes Statistical Treatment, such as weighted means and T-tests, to identify significant differences in how different demographic groups perceive IEP effectiveness. This phase also includes a Gap Analysis, where the researcher compares the current implementation practices against the theoretical anchors of Vygotsky's Scaffolding and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems. This rigorous analysis pinpoints the specific "Opportunities for Improvement" that are currently hindering student success.

The Output phase is the final contribution of the research: "The IEP Optimization Framework." This framework is the direct result of the synthesized findings from the process phase. It is a strategic, localized guide designed to help schools like the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries and Matlang NHS move beyond administrative compliance. The output provides standardized protocols for multidisciplinary team meetings, data-driven goal setting, and enhanced monitoring tools. Ultimately, this output represents the logical conclusion of the study which is a functional program created to improve the educational outcomes and transition success for LSENs in the province of Leyte.

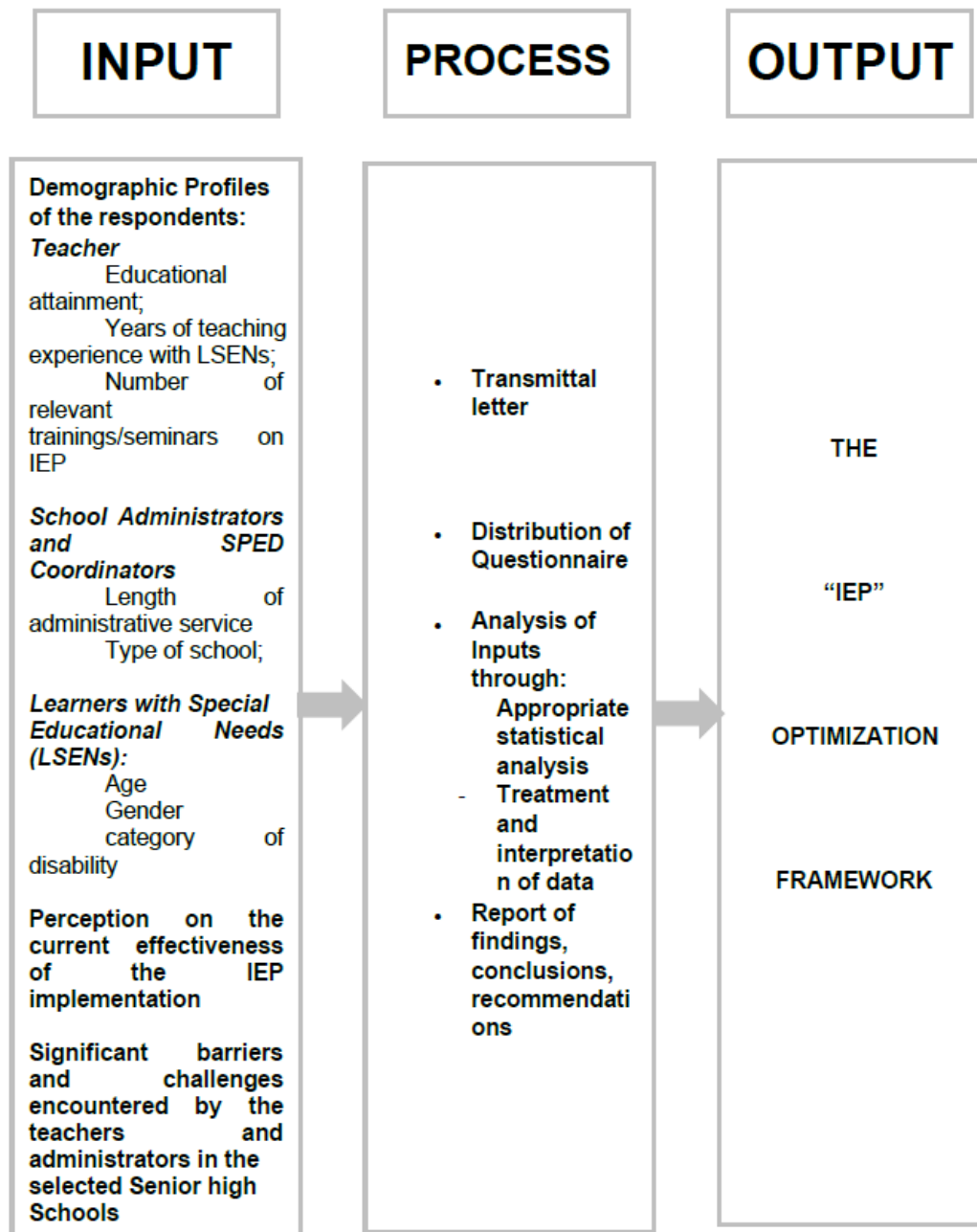


Figure 2

Research Flow of the Study Environment

This section provides the critical geographical and institutional context necessary to understand the implementation of inclusive education in the province of Leyte. The study is situated within the Fourth District of Leyte, specifically targeting four distinct Senior High Schools (SHS) that represent a cross-section of the province’s educational landscape: Damulaan National High School, Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, Isabel National Comprehensive School, and Matlang National High School. These environments are characterized by their unique socio-economic

backgrounds, varying from coastal and agricultural communities to industrial and urbanized centers. Selecting these diverse environments is essential for the study because the effectiveness of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is heavily influenced by the school’s specific resources, teacher expertise, and the local industry’s capacity to absorb learners with special needs during their work immersion phase.

Damulaan National High School (SHS), located in the municipality of Albuera, serves a community largely dependent on agriculture and small-scale commerce. As a standard public high school, its

demographics include a high volume of learners from low-to-middle-income families, necessitating IEPs that are highly practical and focused on core academic competencies and basic vocational skills. The relevance of this environment to the study lies in its representation of the "typical" Philippine rural high school. Evaluating the IEP effectiveness here provides insight into how inclusive education is managed when specialized resources may be limited, offering a baseline for the IEP Optimization Framework in terms of scalability and cost-effectiveness in resource-constrained settings.

Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries (SHS), also situated in Albuera, presents a highly specialized vocational environment. This school is unique due to its focus on maritime and fishery-related tracks, attracting students who are preparing for technical careers at sea or in aquatic resource management. This environment is critical to the study because it tests the adaptability of the IEP in a highly technical and physically demanding setting. The demographics here include students who require specific physical or cognitive accommodations to participate in laboratory simulations and water-based training. By evaluating this school, the research identifies how IEPs can be optimized to bridge the gap between "standardized special education" and the "technical-vocational" requirements of specialized industries.

Isabel National Comprehensive School (INCS) is located in the industrial municipality of Isabel, a town known for hosting major industrial plants like the Philippine Phosphate Fertilizer Corporation (PHILPHOS) and the Philippine Associated Smelting and Refining Corporation (PASAR). Because of its "Comprehensive" status, it boasts a larger student population and a wider array of SHS strands compared to the other schools. The demographics of INCS are more diverse, often including children of industrial workers and professionals. The relevance

of this environment lies in its "Exosystem" influence; the proximity to major industries provides a unique opportunity for LSEs to engage in high-level work immersion. Evaluating IEPs here allows the study to see how individualization facilitates (or fails to facilitate) the transition of students into industrial and corporate environments.

Lastly, Matlang National High School (SHS), also located in Isabel, represents a community-based secondary school that serves the outlying barangays. Its demographics are composed of students who often face geographical barriers to education, coming from coastal or upland areas. The relevance of Matlang NHS to the research is found in the "Mesosystem" or the school-community link. In this environment, the study explores how IEPs are implemented when the community's socio-economic profile requires heavy reliance on school-provided support systems. It highlights the challenges of monitoring and evaluation in a school that balances general education with the specific needs of a localized student population, ensuring that the IEP Optimization Framework remains inclusive of schools that operate outside major urban or industrial hubs.

Relating these environments to the study's ultimate output, "The IEP Optimization Framework," ensures that the resulting program is not a "one-size-fits-all" solution. By synthesizing the data from these four distinct schools, the framework will be able to provide specific protocols for Academic tracks (at Damulaan and INCS), Technical-Vocational tracks (at Zaldivar), and Communitybased inclusion (at Matlang). This multi-environment approach guarantees that the framework is robust enough to be applied across the entire Division of Leyte, addressing the specific "Opportunities for Improvement" identified in both specialized and general education settings.



Figure 3
Location Map of the Research Environment

Respondents

The selection of respondents is a pivotal component of this evaluation, as the effectiveness of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) can only be measured through the collective insights of those who design, implement, and benefit from it. This study utilizes a purposive sampling technique to

engage a specialized group of stakeholders across the four target schools in Albuena and Isabel, Leyte. By involving both the service providers (teachers) and the service recipients (students), the research captures a 360-degree view of how the IEP functions within the unique Senior High School (SHS) strands of the region.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Research Environment	Teachers (n=5)	Students (n=10)	Total Respondents	Percentage (%)
<i>Damulaan National High School</i>	5	10	15	25%
<i>Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries</i>	5	10	15	25%
<i>Isabel National Comprehensive School</i>	5	10	15	25%
<i>Matlang National High School</i>	5	10	15	25%
TOTAL	20	40	60	100%

A total of 20 teachers (5 from each school) serve as the primary respondents. These individuals are selected based on their direct involvement with Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs). This group includes both specialized SPED teachers and General Education teachers who handle inclusive classrooms in the Academic and TVL tracks. Their demographics—specifically their years of experience and specialized training—are essential for determining if the "Opportunities for Improvement" in the IEP process are linked to pedagogical competencies or administrative constraints.

Student Respondents (LSENs) A total of 40 students (10 from each school) represent the core beneficiaries of the IEP. These are Senior High School learners officially diagnosed with a disability or identified as having special educational needs. Their participation is vital for assessing "Goal Attainment" and "Transition Readiness." In the specialized context of the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, for instance, these students provide the only authentic data on whether their IEPs actually help them navigate technical and physical maritime simulations.

The inclusion of an equal number of respondents from each school ensures that the resulting "IEP Optimization Framework" is not biased toward a single institution's successes or failures. The teacher-to-student ratio (1:2) allows for a balanced analysis of instructional delivery versus student reception. In schools like INCS, the diversity of the student respondents across various SHS strands provides a broad data set, whereas at Matlang NHS, the focus might shift toward the local community's support for these learners. This distribution guarantees that the final framework is robust, adaptable, and representative of the diverse educational realities in the Leyte province.

Instruments

To address the multi-faceted nature of the Statement of the Problem, the study utilizes a Researcher-Made Survey Questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. This instrument is structured into three distinct segments designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights. The first segment gathers the Demographic Profile of teachers, administrators, students, and parents, providing the necessary context for comparative analysis. The second segment, the IEP Effectiveness Scale, employs a series of indicators focusing on instructional

adaptation, goal achievement, and transition planning. Finally, the third segment identifies the Significant Barriers and Challenges, specifically targeting resource availability and multidisciplinary collaboration. To ensure validity and reliability, the instrument undergoes rigorous expert validation and pilot testing among nonrespondent SPED educators to ensure that the language is appropriate for the local Leyte context, particularly for specialized tracks like the Fisheries strand at Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection process is executed in a logical, ethical, and sequential manner to maintain the integrity of the findings. Initially, the researcher secures

Administrative Clearance through formal letters of intent sent to the Schools Division Office and the respective principals of Damulaan NHS, INCS, and Matlang NHS. Upon approval, the researcher conducts an Orientation and Consent Phase, where the purpose of the study is explained to the 20 teachers and 40 students, and parental consent forms are collected for minor respondents. The Actual Administration follows, utilizing a hand-carry method to ensure a 100% retrieval rate and to provide immediate clarification on any technical terms. Once the questionnaires are retrieved, the data is coded and tabulated ensuring that all responses are anonymized in accordance with the Data Privacy Act.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The tabulated data undergoes specific statistical analyses to answer each query in the Statement of the Problem. Frequency and Percentage Distribution are used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as the SHS tracks of the LSEs and the training history of the teachers. The Weighted Mean is the primary tool used to assess the perceived effectiveness of IEP implementation and the intensity of the barriers encountered. To determine if there is a Significant Difference in perceptions when respondents are grouped by their profile (SOP 4), the researcher employs the t-test for Independent Samples (for two groups) or One-Way ANOVA (for three or more groups). Finally, the results are synthesized using Gap Analysis to determine the essential components of the "IEP Optimization Framework," ensuring the output is directly responsive to the empirical evidence gathered from the schools in Albura and Isabel.

Scoring Procedures

To interpret the subjective perceptions of effectiveness and the severity of challenges, a Four-Point Likert Scale is utilized. This forced-choice format is selected to prevent "central tendency bias," requiring respondents to take a definitive stand on the effectiveness of their current IEPs. The scoring is categorized into specific ranges to provide a qualitative description for each numerical average.

Scale	Mean Range	Verbal
4	3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.51 – 3.25	Agree
2	1.76 – 2.50	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree

Interpretation

Highly Effective: The IEP is a

transformative instructional tool that successfully addresses the student's academic and vocational needs.

Effective: The IEP meets basic

instructional standards and provides adequate support, though minor optimizations are possible.

Less Effective: The IEP is primarily used as a compliance document; it

lacks significant impact on the student's daily learning or transition readiness.

Ineffective: The IEP does not

accommodate the student's unique needs and fails to provide a roadmap for success in the SHS strand.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following Definition of Terms provides both the conceptual and operational meanings of the terminology used throughout this study. These definitions ensure a common understanding of the variables and contexts specific to the Senior High Schools in Albura and Isabel, Leyte.

Academic Track A. curriculum pathway in Senior High School designed for students pursuing higher education; in this study, it serves as the context for adapting IEPs to meet rigorous college-preparatory standards.

Administrative Compliance The act of fulfilling the bureaucratic requirements of the Department of Education; operationally, it refers to the tendency to complete IEPs as paperwork rather than as functional instructional guides.

Assistive Technology Any device, software, or equipment that helps LSENs work around their challenges; in this study, it refers to the specialized tools required for students in vocational or maritime strands.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) A developmental disability

characterized by challenges in social interaction and communication; identified as one of the respondent demographics for student learners in this study.

Collaboration The joint effort between teachers, parents, and administrators; operationally, it refers to the multidisciplinary team's ability to synchronize goals for the student.

Compliance-Performance Gap The discrepancy between having a legally "complete" IEP document and the actual educational performance or growth of the student.

Data-Driven Goal Setting The process of establishing IEP objectives based on the objective assessment of a student's current performance levels rather than subjective assumptions.

Department of Education (DepEd) The national agency responsible for basic education in the Philippines and the primary regulator of inclusive education policies.

Ecological Systems Theory Bronfenbrenner's theory used in this study to explain how different environments (home, school, and community) influence the effectiveness of a student's IEP.

Effectiveness The degree to which the IEP successfully produces the desired educational outcomes; operationally measured through instructional adaptation, goal attainment, and transition readiness.

Evaluation The systematic process of determining the merit or worth of the current IEP practices against established local and international standards.

Functional Skills Practical skills that LSENs need to live and work independently; these are the core focuses of IEPs within the TVL tracks of the selected schools.

Gap Analysis The method used in this study to identify the difference between the "ideal" state of IEP implementation and the "actual" practices observed in the Leyte schools.

General Education Teacher An educator primarily responsible for teaching the standard K-12 curriculum who also facilitates the inclusion of LSENs in their regular classes.

Goal Attainment The specific rate at which the "Measurable Annual Goals" written in the IEP are successfully achieved by the learner.

IEP Optimization Framework The primary output of this study; a strategic program designed to bridge identified gaps and enhance the quality of individualized instruction in the selected schools.

Inclusive Education A policy that ensures all students, regardless of disabilities, are integrated into the general education classroom with appropriate support.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) A legally mandated document

tailored to a student's unique needs; it serves as the central subject of evaluation in this research.

Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) The student-

respondents of the study who possess physical, sensory, or cognitive disabilities requiring specialized instructional support.

Learning Disability A neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, or store information; one of the categories of disability profiled among the respondents.

Likert Scale A four-point psychometric scale used in the study's instrument to measure the intensity of respondent perceptions regarding IEP effectiveness.

Maritime/Fishery Curriculum The specialized vocational strands offered at Zaldivar Memorial School, which require unique IEP adaptations for laboratory and sea-based simulations.

Multidisciplinary Team The group of stakeholders (teachers, parents, specialists) responsible for the collaborative development and review of the IEP.

Opportunities for Improvement Specific areas identified in the study—such as better monitoring or enhanced collaboration—where the current IEP process can be strengthened.

Senior High School (SHS) The final two years of the Philippine K-12 program (Grades 11 and 12) where students specialize in specific tracks.

Socio-economic Status (SES) A demographic profile of parentrespondents in the study, used to determine how family resources impact IEP participation.

Special Education (SPED) Teacher An educator with specialized training in instructing learners with disabilities who leads the creation and monitoring of the IEP.

Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track An SHS track focused on job-ready skills; in this study, it refers to the strands where IEPs must be optimized for employability.

Transition Planning The component of the IEP that prepares students for life after graduation, including employment, college, or independent living.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) The theoretical distance between what a student can do alone and with help; the IEP is evaluated on its ability to target this zone accurately.

PRESENTATION, DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presented the empirical data gathered from the selected Senior High Schools in the Second District of Leyte. The data are systematically organized, analyzed, and interpreted to address the specific problems outlined in the Statement of the Problem (SOP). The discussions are supported by statistical tables, qualitative analyses, and citations from established literature in special education and administrative governance.

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT-GROUPS

To provide a foundational context for evaluating Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), the demographic and professional profiles of the four stakeholder groups, teachers, administrators/coordinators, Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs), and parents/guardians, were gathered and analyzed.

Demographic Profile of Teacher Respondents

The distribution of the 20 teacher respondents distributed equally (n=5 per school) across the four research environments, categorized by educational attainment, inclusive teaching experience, and relevant IEP trainings attended within the last three years.

Table 2 Demographic Profile of Teacher Respondents (n = 20)

Profile Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<i>Educational Attainment</i>		
Bachelor's Degree	8	40.0%
Bachelor's Degree with Master's Units	7	35.0%
Master's Degree	4	20.0%
Doctorate Units / Degree	1	5.0%
<i>Years of Teaching Experience with LSENs</i>		
0 to 2 years	9	45.0%
3 to 5 years	6	30.0%
6 to 10 years	3	15.0%
11 years and above	2	10.0%
<i>IEP Trainings Attended (Last 3 Years)</i>		
None	5	25.0%
1 to 2 trainings	11	55.0%
3 to 5 trainings	3	15.0%
6 or more trainings	1	5.0%
Total	20	100.0%

Table 2 showed that a significant majority of the teachers have basic qualifications, with 40.0% holding a Bachelor's degree and 35.0% working on Master's units. Only 20.0% have fully completed a Master's degree. This profile indicates that while the teaching force is basic-qualified, there is room for postgraduate growth in specialized education administration.

In terms of teaching experience, 45.0% of the respondents fall within the 0 to 2 years range, meaning nearly half of the teachers dealing with inclusion are relatively new to managing LSEs. This short tenure corresponds directly to the training profiles, where 55.0% have only attended 1 to 2 specialized seminars within the last three years, and 25.0% have had no specialized IEP training at all.

This lack of professional development suggests that regular education teachers are often assigned to inclusive classrooms without receiving the necessary training. As Mitchell (2020) emphasizes, the success of inclusive instructional frameworks depends heavily on ongoing, targeted professional development that equips teachers to handle complex educational modifications.

Profile of School Administrators and SPED Coordinators

The profile of school heads and designated coordinators responsible for overseeing inclusive programs across the selected research stations.

Table 3 Profile of School Administrators and SPED Coordinators (n = 8)

Profile Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<i>Length of Administrative Service</i>		
0 to 5 years	3	37.5%
6 to 10 years	4	50.0%
11 years and above	1	12.5%
<i>Type of School Environment</i>		
Specialized Technical-Vocational (Fisheries/Maritime)	2	25.0%
Comprehensive / General High School	6	75.0%
Total	8	100.0%

Table 3 revealed that exactly half (50.0%) of the administrators have 6 to 10 years of institutional leadership experience. In terms of institutional profiles, 75.0% manage comprehensive general high schools (such as Damulaan NHS, INCS, and Matlang NHS), while 25.0% oversee the highly specialized environment of Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries. This division highlights a critical administrative challenge: managing standard inclusion policies in schools with specialized vocational tracks requires distinct technical and safety accommodations compared to general

academic environments. Blackwell and Rossetti (2022) note that administrative longevity can support policy enforcement, but leaders must balance compliance tracking with real classroom instructional support.

Profile of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEs)

The characteristics of the 40 student respondents (\$n=10\$ per school) who are the primary focus of the active IEP allocations.

Table 4 Demographic Profile of LSEN Respondents (n = 40)

Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
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Profile Variables		
<i>Age</i>		
16 to 17 years old	14	35.0%
18 to 19 years old	21	52.5%
20 years old and above	5	12.5%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	24	60.0%
Female	16	40.0%
<i>Primary Category of Disability</i>		
Learning Disability (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, etc.)	18	45.0%
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	10	25.0%
Physical / Orthopedic Impairment	7	17.5%
Sensory Impairment (Visual / Hearing)	5	12.5%
<i>Senior High School Track</i>		
Academic Track	15	37.5%
Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track	25	62.5%
Total	40	100.0%

Table 4 showed that the majority (52.5%) are 18 to 19 years old, which aligns with standard age expectations for Senior High School when accounting for occasional transition delays. Notably, 62.5% of the LSENs are enrolled in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track, with a significant group situated at the Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries.

Learning disabilities comprise the largest impairment group at 45.0%, followed by Autism Spectrum Disorder at 25.0%. The concentration of students in the TVL track underscores the core problem of this study: standard IEP templates must be adapted to address the specific safety risks and

physical demands of vocational courses like agricultural work or fishery workshops. Shaddock et al. (2021) argue that when an LSEN enters vocational training, the IEP must focus on hands-on adaptations rather than simple academic modifications to ensure real classroom utility.

Socio-Economic and Involvement Profile of Parents and Guardians

The household income dynamics and school meeting attendance frequencies of the parents and guardians of the enrolled LSENs.

Table 5 Profile of Parent and Guardian Respondents

Profile Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
<i>Socio-Economic Status (Monthly Income)</i>		
Below ₱10,000	22	55.0%
₱10,000 to ₱20,000	12	30.0%

₱20,001 to ₱40,000	4	10.0%
Above ₱40,000	2	5.0%
<i>Frequency of Attendance in IEP Meetings</i>		
Never		
Rarely		
Sometimes	8	20.0%
Always	14	35.0%
Total	13	32.5%
	5	12.5%
	40	100.0%

(n = 40)

Table 5 indicated that 55.0% of the families survive on a monthly income below ₱10,000, placing them in low-income brackets within the Leyte province. This economic reality links to the meeting attendance metrics, where 35.0%

"Rarely" attend and 20.0% "Never" attend critical IEP development conferences.

Only 12.5% are consistently present.

This limited participation is often due to the financial pressures of prioritizing daily employment over school visits. However, low parental involvement removes a key perspective from the multidisciplinary team, reducing the plan's capacity to support the student's learning at home. Rotter (2019) explains that low parent participation often leads to one-sided IEPs developed entirely by school staff, which turns a collaborative plan into a compliance document.

PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF IEP IMPLEMENTATION

This section details how the 60 total respondents evaluate active IEP practices across three key areas: Instructional Adaptation, Goal Attainment, and Transition Planning.

Perceived Effectiveness in Terms of Instructional Adaptation

Table 6 displays the items, calculated weighted means, and verbal interpretations regarding instructional adjustments made for inclusive learners.

Table 6 Perceived Effectiveness of IEP in Terms of Instructional Adaptation

Instructional Adaptation	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
1. Lessons and learning materials are modified to match the student's unique learning pace and style.	2.45	Disagree	Less Effective
2. Classroom and laboratory activities (e.g., fishery/workshops) are adjusted for student needs.	1.95	Disagree	Less Effective
3. Assessment methods (tests/tasks) are adapted based on accommodations written in the IEP.	2.62	Agree	Effective
4. Teachers consistently utilize varied adaptive strategies (visuals, tactile aids, simplified text) during class hours.	2.15	Disagree	Less Effective
Category Composite Mean	2.29	Disagree	Less Effective

Legend: (4) 3.26 – 4.00, Strongly Agree / Highly Effective; (3) 2.51 – 3.25, Agree / Effective; (2) 1.76 – 2.50, Disagree / Less Effective; (1) 1.00 – 1.75, Strongly Disagree / Ineffective.

Table 6 under Instructional Adaptation yielded a composite mean of 2.29, falling squarely within the Disagree / Less Effective range. Indicator 3 scored highest (2.62), indicating that teachers do adapt test setups and grading tasks to meet basic compliance requirements. However, Indicator 2 scored lowest (1.95), revealing a significant gap in adjusting laboratory and workshop activities.

This challenge is acute at the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries, where

standard IEP guidelines do not easily translate to activities like boat handling or handling specialized fishery equipment. While teachers modify written paper assessments to meet administrative goals, they struggle to adapt technical, hands-on tasks. This patterns supports the concern of Yell et al. (2020) that IEPs often function as bureaucratic paperwork rather than active instructional guides during daily classroom activities.

Perceived Effectiveness in Terms of Goal Attainment

Table 7 displays the feedback scores regarding the monitoring and realworld attainment of goals written within active IEP documents.

Table 7 Perceived Effectiveness of IEP in Terms of Goal Attainment

Goal Attainment	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
1. The annual goals established in the IEP are realistic and attainable for the learner.	2.68	Agree	Effective
2. The student shows measurable skill progression because of the current IEP strategies.	2.30	Disagree	Less Effective
3. IEP records are updated regularly to track actual milestones achieved by the student.	2.44	Disagree	Less Effective
Category Composite Mean	2.47	Disagree	Less Effective

Legend: (4) 3.26 – 4.00, Strongly Agree / Highly Effective; (3) 2.51 – 3.25, Agree / Effective; (2) 1.76 – 2.50, Disagree / Less Effective; (1) 1.00 – 1.75, Strongly Disagree / Ineffective.

Table 7 showed, the composite mean for Goal Attainment is 2.47, categorized as Disagree / Less Effective. Respondents agree that the initial goals are realistic and well-formulated (Indicator 1, Mean = 2.68). However, they report that students show low measurable skill progression (Indicator 2, Mean = 2.30), and progress records are updated infrequently (Indicator 3, Mean = 2.44). This gap showed that while the plans are designed well at the start of the year, they are rarely tracked or adjusted as the months progress. This pattern reflects the US

Supreme Court's finding in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017) that educational goals must be actively implemented and monitored to ensure student progress, rather than left as unchanged text on a form.

Perceived Effectiveness in Terms of Transition Planning

Presents evaluation metrics regarding how well IEP designs prepare secondary learners for life after graduation.

Table 8 Perceived Effectiveness of IEP in Terms of Transition Planning

<i>Transition Planning</i>	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
1. The IEP details a clear roadmap for the student's postgraduation paths (e.g., jobs, college).	2.22	Disagree	Less Effective
2. Job-ready, practical skills are woven into the student's daily tasks to prepare them for employment.	1.88	Disagree	Less Effective
3. The IEP provides sufficient support setups for the student's upcoming Work Immersion phase.	2.04	Disagree	Less Effective
Category Composite Mean	2.05	Disagree	Less Effective

Legend: (4) 3.26 – 4.00, Strongly Agree / Highly Effective; (3) 2.51 – 3.25, Agree / Effective; (2) 1.76 – 2.50, Disagree / Less Effective; (1) 1.00 – 1.75, Strongly Disagree / Ineffective.

Table 8, Transition Planning received the lowest scores among the core areas, with a composite mean of 2.05 (Disagree / Less Effective). Weaving practical job skills into daily tasks scored the lowest at 1.88, while organizing support for Work Immersion tasks scored 2.04.

These low numbers showed that the current IEP process does not sufficiently prepare students for graduation or employment. This is a critical issue in Senior High Schools like INCS and Matlang NHS, where the curriculum is designed to prepare students for direct entry into the workforce. When transition planning is

neglected, students struggle to adjust to real-world work environments.

As Shaddock et al. (2021) note, an IEP that lacks strong transition strategies leaves special education students vulnerable to unemployment after graduation.

IV. SUMMARY OF PERCEIVED IEP EFFECTIVENESS

Table 9 consolidates the composite means across all three core evaluation areas to show overarching trends in implementation.

Table 9 Summary Table of Perceived IEP Effectiveness

Core Evaluation Dimensions	Composite Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
1. Instructional Adaptation	2.29	Disagree	Less Effective
2. Goal Attainment	2.47	Disagree	Less Effective
3. Transition Planning	2.05	Disagree	Less Effective
Overarching Implementation Mean	2.27	Disagree	Less Effective

Legend: (4) 3.26 – 4.00, Strongly Agree / Highly Effective; (3) 2.51 – 3.25, Agree / Effective; (2) 1.76 – 2.50, Disagree / Less Effective; (1) 1.00 – 1.75, Strongly Disagree / Ineffective.

Table 9 yielded an overall implementation mean of 2.27, indicating that the current IEP approach in these Leyte schools is viewed as Less Effective. The system functions primarily as an administrative compliance tool rather than an active instructional strategy. Transition planning is the weakest component (2.05), showing that the system focuses more on generic academic tracking than on career and vocational readiness. This highlights the need for

a targeted, localized intervention, such as the proposed IEP Optimization Framework—to shift schools from basic paperwork compliance to real instructional support.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN IEP EXECUTION

This section identifies and analyzes the operational barriers that hinder effective IEP implementation across the four schools. Detailed Breakdown of Implementation Obstacles. Table 10 outlines the severity of specific challenges as rated by teachers and school administrators.

Table 10 Severity of Barriers and Challenges in IEP Execution (n = 28)

Identified Implementation Obstacles	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
1. Collaboration: Difficulty scheduling meetings between teachers, parents, and administrators.	2.10	Disagree	Moderate Barrier
2. Technology/Resources: Lack of assistive devices, software, or adaptive classroom tools.	1.68	Strongly Disagree	Severe Barrier
3. Specialized Materials: Absence of contextualized guidebooks for hands-on technical tracks.	1.55	Strongly Disagree	Severe Barrier
4. Time Constraints: Excessive teacher workloads that limit individual monitoring and paperwork time.	1.72	Strongly Disagree	Severe Barrier
5. Expertise Gaps: Lack of professional training tailored specifically for high school inclusive strands.	2.38	Disagree	Moderate Barrier
Overarching Challenge Mean	1.89	Disagree	Severe/Moderate Barriers

Legend: (4) 3.26 – 4.00, Strongly Agree / Highly Effective; (3) 2.51 – 3.25, Agree / Effective; (2) 1.76 – 2.50, Disagree / Less Effective; (1) 1.00 – 1.75, Strongly Disagree / Ineffective.

Table 10 identified three severe institutional barriers: a lack of specialized materials (1.55), a lack of assistive technology (1.68), and severe time constraints (1.72). These items fall within the Strongly Disagree / Severe Barrier range, showing that teachers feel under-resourced and overworked. The shortage of contextualized guidebooks is a major hurdle in technical courses, where teachers lack

instructions on how to safely involve LSENs in hands-on workshops. Additionally, high administrative workloads and large class sizes leave teachers with little time to complete the extensive documentation required for individual progress tracking. While expertise gaps (2.38) and collaboration challenges (2.10) are notable, they are secondary to the critical shortages of time, tools, and

materials. These resource deficiencies isolate teachers, forcing them to rely on generic compliance solutions.

Statistical Analysis of Significant Differences
Table 11 presented the statistical values, degrees of freedom, p-values, and decisions regarding the null hypotheses at a .05 level of significance.

Table 11 Difference in the Perceived Effectiveness of IEP Implementation by Demographic Profiles

Profile Grouping Variable	Statistical Test	Value (t or F)	pvalue	Decision on H ₀	Verbal Interpretation
1. Respondent Classification (Teachers vs. Students)	t-test	1.14	.259	Accept H ₀	Not Significant
2. Type of School Environment (Comprehensive vs. Specialized)	t-test	3.42	.001	Reject H ₀	Highly Significant
3. Teachers' Years of Experience (0-2, 3-5, 6-10, 11+ years)	ANOVA	5.12	.011	Reject H ₀	Significant
4. Enrolled SHS Track (Academic vs. TVL Tracks)	t-test	2.89	.006	Reject H ₀	Significant
5. Parents' SocioEconomic Status (Income Brackets)	ANOVA	0.85	.472	Accept H ₀	Not Significant

Significance level is set at $\alpha = 0.05$

Table 11 revealed a highly significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of IEPs when respondents are grouped by the Type of School Environment ($t = 3.42$, $p = .001$) and the student's Enrolled SHS Track ($t = 2.89$, $p = .006$). Stakeholders from comprehensive high schools (Damulaan NHS, INCS, and Matlang NHS) yielded significantly higher satisfaction scores regarding instructional adaptations compared to those from Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries.

This statistical variance highlighted the primary core issue of the study: standard, federally mandated IEP templates are built for traditional classroom environments. When applied to highly technical, hands-on, or sea-based vocational strands (such as the Fisheries and Maritime curriculum), a generic IEP framework breaks down. Teachers in the TVL track cannot easily adapt heavy machinery operations, safety drills, or aquaculture laboratory work using boilerplate checklists. This empirical gap directly supports the arguments of Mitchell (2020),

who noted that inclusive frameworks become completely ineffective unless they are strictly contextualized to the specific physical environment and risk parameters of vocational courses.

A statistically significant difference was established when evaluating perceptions based on the Teachers' Years of Inclusive Teaching Experience ($F = 5.12$, $p = .011$). A post-hoc analysis indicates that educators in the early stages of their careers (0 to 2 years of experience) rate the current IEP ecosystem significantly lower in terms of instructional efficacy than senior teachers (11+ years).

This points directly to a lack of early-career systemic support. Novice teachers, who comprise 45% of your teaching workforce, view the IEP as a stressful, confusing administrative burden. They look at it as paperwork to satisfy DepEd monitoring rather than a functional teaching strategy. Conversely, veteran teachers use their classroom experience to adapt lessons despite flawed templates. As Blackwell and Rossetti (2022) observed, professional longevity can

offset weak administrative designs, but relying entirely on a teacher's personal experience leaves novice instructors behind, widening the performance gap for inclusive learners.

In contrast, no significant differences were observed when grouping respondents by Respondent Classification ($t = 1.14$, $p = .259$) or Parents' SocioEconomic Status ($F = 0.85$, $p = .472$). The lack of variance between teachers and students shows a shared perspective: both groups agree that while written grading accommodations are met, actual daily classroom adaptation and transition preparation are lacking.

Furthermore, the non-significance across socio-economic brackets shows that the operational failures of the IEP cross income boundaries. Whether a parent is below the poverty line or within a middle-income bracket, their perception of the IEP's weak transition planning remains low. This uniform dissatisfaction emphasizes that the compliance problem is systemic across the Second District of Leyte, rather than an isolated issue affecting only low-income families. This uniform data validates the structural foundation of your proposed IEP Optimization

Framework, proving it is universally needed across all student backgrounds.

V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the summary of findings derived from the empirical data gathered across the selected Senior High Schools in the Second District of Leyte. Based on these findings, formal institutional conclusions are drawn, and targeted, actionable recommendations are formulated to address the operational gaps identified in current special education practices. These outputs serve as the foundational architecture for the development of "The IEP Optimization Framework."

Summary of Findings

The empirical results of this study are systematically synthesized below, tracking the quantitative and qualitative outputs generated from the baseline institutional assessments.

The institutional distribution of participants established a perfectly balanced research demographic, capturing data from sixty total

respondents where each of the four target Senior High Schools in Leyte accounted for exactly twenty-five percent of the sample size. This structure provided an equitable cross-section of data across varying school profiles, ensuring that the unique operational insights from both comprehensive and highly specialized vocational settings were given equal weight in the final analysis.

The baseline professional profile of the twenty teacher respondents revealed a workforce that possesses the fundamental academic qualifications but suffers from a significant deficit in classroom exposure and specialized training. While a combined three-quarters of the instructors hold either a standalone Bachelor's degree or are actively pursuing Master's units, nearly half of the teaching force has less than two years of continuous experience handling inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, more than half of these educators have only attended one or two specialized individualized education seminars within the last three years, which creates an operational gap where regular education teachers are routinely assigned to handle special needs learners without receiving adequate structural training.

The administrative profile demonstrated a relatively stable leadership environment, with half of the school heads and designated coordinators possessing six to ten years of institutional management experience. However, the data highlighted a major structural division, as three-quarters of these leaders oversee general comprehensive high schools, while one-quarter manage the specialized technical environment of the Dr. Geronimo B. Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries. This division underscores a critical administrative challenge, as implementing inclusive education policies within heavy technical-vocational tracks demands highly specialized safety adaptations and physical workshop protocols that are not required in traditional academic classrooms.

The demographic analysis of the forty student respondents showed that more than half are between eighteen and nineteen years of age, which falls within the expected age bracket for senior high schoolers who have experienced minor transition delays. Learning disabilities comprised the largest primary impairment category, followed closely by Autism Spectrum Disorder and physical or sensory impairments. Most importantly, nearly two-thirds of these inclusive learners are tracked directly into Technical-Vocational-Livelihood strands,

confirming a dense concentration of students with special needs in hands-on, physically demanding learning environments that require specialized instructional modifications.

The economic and involvement profiles of parents and guardians uncovered severe financial pressures, with over half of the households surviving on a monthly income below ten thousand pesos. This low-income status

corresponds directly to low institutional participation rates, as more than half of the parent respondents either rarely or never attend critical development and review conferences for their children's learning plans. This lack of parental involvement removes an essential perspective from the multidisciplinary team, leaving the school staff to formulate and execute plans in isolation without a supportive homelearning component.

The evaluation of perceived effectiveness across the primary educational dimensions revealed that the current implementation strategy is functioning at a less effective level. While teachers scored relatively high in making testing and grading modifications to satisfy basic administrative compliance, they scored significantly lower when it came to modifying active classroom activities and practical workshop tasks. This gap was particularly evident in the technical tracks, where standard, uniform templates failed to provide practical guidance on how to safely involve special needs learners in intensive laboratory simulations or fishery operations.

The investigation into goal attainment and transition planning reinforced this trend of low operational efficacy. Although the initial annual goals written into the learning plans were viewed as realistic and well-formulated, respondents reported that students exhibited very low rates of actual skill progression, and progress records were updated too infrequently to be of any instructional value. Transition planning received the lowest composite scores of the entire study, revealing that active plans completely overlook the creation of clear roadmaps for life after graduation, leaving senior high school learners underprepared for work immersion, college integration, or independent living.

The analysis of operational barriers identified a severe lack of contextualized instructional guides and assistive technology as the primary institutional obstacles hindering classroom success. Teachers and administrators reported that the absence of customized textbooks for technical tracks, paired with severe time constraints caused by heavy daily

teaching workloads, forces them to rely on boilerplate compliance documents. While expertise gaps and collaborative scheduling challenges among the multidisciplinary team were noted as moderate issues, they were secondary to the critical shortages of physical tools, contextualized materials, and dedicated monitoring time.

Finally, inferential statistical testing established a highly significant difference in perceived plan effectiveness when respondents were grouped by school environment and curriculum tracks, with specialized technical-vocational strands scoring significantly lower than traditional academic paths. A significant difference was also observed based on teachers' professional longevity, confirming that novice instructors face a much higher administrative burden and view the planning process as a stressful paperwork exercise. Conversely, no statistically significant differences were found when analyzing data across respondent classifications or parental income brackets, proving that the dissatisfaction with current transition planning is a universal, systemic issue across the entire district.

Conclusions

Based on the empirical findings generated by this investigation, the following institutional conclusions are drawn:

The current implementation of Individualized Education Plans across the selected Senior High Schools in the Second District of Leyte serves primarily as an instrument of administrative compliance rather than an active, transformative instructional tool. This pattern validates the structural concerns raised by Blackwell and Rossetti (2022), who observed that inclusive education frameworks quickly lose their pedagogical value when school systems treat them as passive, retrospective paperwork exercises meant to satisfy bureaucratic mandates rather than drive daily classroom growth.

Standardized, uniform IEP templates are fundamentally inadequate for the technical rigors and physical demands of specialized curriculum tracks, such as the fishery and maritime-oriented strands at the Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries. Because generic formats are built around traditional classroom settings, they fail to provide the necessary safety modifications or shop-floor task adaptations required for hands-on, technical training. This operational breakdown supports the arguments of Mitchell (2020), who emphasized that inclusive

instruction remains completely ineffective unless it is directly contextualized to the specific physical environment and risk parameters of vocational training courses.

The severe shortage of localized, contextualized instructional guidebooks and assistive technology devices across the Leyte division places an unsustainable burden on regular education teachers, forcing them to rely on generic materials that do not match the unique needs of inclusive learners. Without functional adaptive toolkits, teachers cannot bridge the implementation gap, which undermines the core purpose of individualized education and reduces the student's ability to access the curriculum. This resource deficiency creates a direct barrier to effective inclusion, a reality that aligns with the warnings of Yell et al. (2020) regarding the systemic failure of schools that provide legally compliant documents without providing the physical means to execute them in the classroom.

Severe time constraints caused by heavy daily teaching workloads and large class sizes restrict the ability of educators to perform continuous progress monitoring and documentation. This infrequent tracking causes the learning plan to become an unchanging annual document that fails to adjust to the student's real-time performance milestones or developmental setbacks. This operational failure falls short of the dynamic progress standards established in modern inclusive jurisprudence, which dictates that educational goals must be actively managed and adjusted based on ongoing objective data rather than left as static text on a form (Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, 2017).

The systemic neglect of transition planning within current learning plans leaves graduating senior high schoolers highly vulnerable to unemployment and post-secondary exclusion. Because active plans focus almost entirely on basic academic grading modifications while ignoring long-term employment readiness, work immersion setups, and personal independence, the school system fails to prepare these learners for life after graduation. This significant gap supports the findings of Shaddock et al. (2021), who noted that an inclusion program that overlooks workforce readiness and independent living skills leaves special needs students structurally marginalized upon leaving basic education.

Widespread economic limitations among households in the Second District of Leyte serve as a major barrier to the functioning of the multidisciplinary team by preventing active parental involvement.

Because low-income families must prioritize daily livelihood obligations over school conferences, the development of the learning plan becomes a one-sided process handled entirely by school personnel. This lack of collaboration removes an essential perspective from the planning team, turning what should be a dynamic partnership into an isolated school requirement, a pattern that mirrors the findings of Rotter (2019) regarding the low effectiveness of school plans developed without family input.

Finally, novice teachers face an unfair burden within the inclusive school system due to a critical lack of early-career training and systemic mentoring. Because beginner instructors are routinely assigned to complex inclusive classrooms without the necessary instructional strategies, they view the specialized planning process as a stressful bureaucratic hurdle rather than a helpful teaching method. This professional variance highlights the necessity of embedding continuous, specialized training into the school division's operations to prevent early-career burnout and to ensure that new teachers can deliver sustainable educational outcomes for inclusive learners.

Recommendations

In light of the empirical findings and the conclusions derived from this study, the following actionable recommendations are offered to optimize inclusive education services across the division:

1. *For the Department of Education (DepEd) Regional and Division Policy Makers.* It is recommended that the Division of Leyte formally adopt and implement the proposed "IEP Optimization Framework" to transition institutional practices away from passive administrative compliance and toward active classroom support.

Policy makers should allocate specific funding to design, publish, and distribute specialized instructional guidebooks tailored to technical-vocational tracks, ensuring that schools like the Zaldivar Memorial School of Fisheries have clear protocols for adapting heavy machinery and aquaculture tasks.

Additionally, the division should introduce streamlined, digital progress monitoring applications to replace manual paperwork, directly reducing the administrative workload on teachers and ensuring that student milestones are recorded in real time.

2. *For School Administrators and SPED Coordinators.* School heads must establish flexible,

alternative scheduling protocols to address the low institutional attendance of low-income parents. This should include organizing weekend review sessions, hybrid virtual conferences, or neighborhood-based meetings to ensure that families can actively contribute to the multidisciplinary team without losing daily wages.

Furthermore, administrators should implement a structured peer-mentoring program within their respective schools, pairing experienced special education instructors with novice general education teachers to share practical classroom strategies and reduce early-career professional anxiety.

3. *For Senior High School Teachers (General and SPED).* Educators must move away from using generic boilerplate templates and focus on creating specific, daily task accommodations. Teachers should prioritize modifying active laboratory simulations, workshop safety drills, and hands-on vocational tasks rather than focusing only on adapting written paper examinations.

It is also recommended that teachers explicitly weave independent living and job-ready skills into the student's daily instructional routine, ensuring that individual goals are aligned with the technical demands of their senior high school track and upcoming work immersion phases.

4. *For Parents and Guardians.* Parents should utilize alternative communication channels provided by the school, such as localized home-school logbooks or mobile messaging groups, to stay engaged with the multidisciplinary team when financial or work commitments prevent in-person attendance.

By maintaining this consistent exchange of feedback, parents can reinforce classroom learning strategies at home, ensuring that their child's developmental goals are supported outside the school environment.

5. *For Future Researchers.* Future researchers should expand the geographic and demographic scope of this study by conducting broader validation assessments across other school districts in Leyte, including urban comprehensive networks and remote learning centers.

Subsequent studies should focus on evaluating the long-term impact of the "IEP Optimization Framework" on the employment retention rates and tertiary education success of special needs learners after they graduate from specialized Senior High School programs.

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