

Inclusive Education Practices at General Santos City SPED Integrated School

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Abstract

Two of the most important determinants of the success of the inclusion or structured placement of children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms are teachers' attitudes toward students with special educational needs and their understanding of how to educate them appropriately. The perspective of educators on the difficulty of educating students with special educational needs has been cited as a crucial factor in deciding whether or not schools are inclusive settings. If inclusion teachers do not view the teaching of these pupils as an essential part of their work, they will attempt to have someone else (often the special education teacher) assume responsibility for these students, which will create covert segregation inside the school. In other words, they will not embrace the education of these youngsters as part of their work responsibilities (e.g., the special class). This study examines the inclusive education practices of teachers in the General Santos City SPED Integrated School of the Philippines during the 2022–2023 school year. This inquiry employs the descriptive-correlational methodology. The Modified Opinions Relative to the Integration of Children with Disabilities (MORID) survey was completed by 115 female and 38 male full-time general education and special education instructors from one regional school. These educators were questioned regarding their views on the inclusion of students with impairments. Respondents were well-informed about inclusive education and held favorable opinions concerning inclusion. Schools must provide sufficient learning support providers and educational resources, as well as in-depth specialization courses that provide specialized practices for implementing the special education strategies in their classrooms and teaching strategies for bridging theory and practice. Individualized education plan (IEP) provisions, curriculum adjustments, and classroom adaptations that are suitable for learners with special educational needs should be incorporated into the design and actual implementation of learning support programs.

Keywords: Inclusive Education Practices; Public Elementary & Secondary Teachers

1. Introduction

The prevalence of children having educational needs is increasing in the Philippines hence the Department of Education's rigid campaign for Special Education Programs and Inclusive Education and its widespread implementation. They provide educational assessment, intervention programs, proper educational placement, and special education teachers to cater to their needs. Some of the learners are placed in the inclusion as some can cope with 50% to 100% of the competencies in the regular class. Inclusion refers to the teaching of students with disabilities in settings of general education. (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). Inclusion is based

on the idea that all kids with disabilities have the right to go to school with other kids and get the help and resources they need to do well.

In addition, effective inclusion methods have received less attention in secondary education compared to primary education, despite a greater need at this level. Increased secondary inclusion challenges include, but are not limited to, a wider range of students, more students with disabilities, high-stakes tests, more content area instruction, new requirements for highly qualified teachers, and higher standards for all students (Dieker, 2007; Sabornie & deBettencourt, 2009). General and special educators are now legally responsible for the performance of diverse students. Teachers must alter their preparation and instruction to fit the demands of the inclusive classroom because their roles and duties have shifted, particularly at the secondary level (Muraski, 2009).

This study aims to get the percentage of readiness of teachers in general and special education in implementing inclusive education. The outcomes of this survey will provide administrators with information and help them prepare their teachers for inclusion, as well as address specific teacher concerns. This will also include guidelines and actions to encourage educators who work with or help students with different educational needs to use inclusive practices.

2. Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify the inclusive education practices of General Santos City SPED Integrated School.

Specifically, the study aims to answer the following:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 sex
 - 1.2 age
 - 1.3 education profile of teacher
 - 1.4 nationality
 - 1.5 degree held
 - 1.6 area of specialization
 - 1.7 years of teaching experience
 - 1.8 special education training
 - 1.9 classroom experience teaching children with disabilities
2. How ready are teachers for inclusive education in terms of their ideas (core perspectives), feelings (expected effects of inclusion), and actions (classroom practices)?
3. Is there a significant relationship between inclusive education practices and the readiness of the teachers?
4. Is there a significant difference in inclusive education practices and the level of teachers' readiness when classified according to profile?

3. Review of Related Literature

Globally, inclusive education (IE) has been a component of a country's policy agenda. As international ideas cross borders, the meaning of this term has evolved in local and national discourse. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) stipulates that every person

with a disability has the right to "inclusive, quality, and free" education on an equal basis with other children, regardless of their disability, gender, race, socioeconomic status, or culture. When all pupils have access to the regular school system, inclusive education has occurred. Inclusion is committed to eradicating segregation in educational settings by offering inclusive classroom instruction in accessible learning environments with the necessary support. This indicates that education systems must deliver individualized instructional responses rather than asking students to conform to the system.

In the Philippines, President Rodrigo R. Duterte has signed a law requiring inclusive education for students with disabilities in all public schools. The Republic Act (RA) 11650, which was signed into law by Duterte on March 11, states that no student may be denied admission on the basis of a disability. It aims to enable and empower all teachers, including those with disabilities, parents, guardians, and family members, by training and equipping them with capabilities for the detection, referral, and introduction of interventions regarding disorders, disabilities, and abilities of the learners (Section 3(j)) and by training and equipping all teachers, including child development teachers and workers, principals, administrators, non-teaching staff of the school, sign language interpreters, and speech-language pathologists (k).

In accordance with Section 2 of Republic Act 7277, this law shall be referred to as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (e). To ease the integration of disabled people into mainstream society, the state shall promote and encourage respect for disabled people. The state shall make every effort to eliminate any social, cultural, economic, environmental, and mental impediments that handicapped individuals face.

Numerous urban and rural public schools still lack adequate resources. This may be one of the reasons why many general education teachers in the Philippines have doubts about their ability to instruct in an inclusive school. In a study conducted by Muega and Echavia (2011), 87 in-service teachers reported that they are willing to handle and collaborate with professionals for the inclusion of learners with special educational needs in general education classrooms, but their overall responses indicate that they are unprepared for the challenge of managing students with disorders or disabilities. His predicament is exacerbated by the fact that he is unable to fulfill other essential IE requirements. Teachers in the Philippines, whether certified or not, must now recognize that they will be spread too thin in an inclusionary setting, as the presence of kids with special needs in a large group of pupils necessitates the creation of more than one lesson plan. While inclusion policy has already been enacted in the Philippines, many schoolteachers have yet to completely comprehend IE's worth (Muega & Echavia, 2011).

4. Theoretical Framework

There are several similarities between Wenger's (1998) Social Theory of Learning and Knowles' (1984) Andragogical Model. The emphasis on the learners' past experiences is one of the most evident parallels. Wenger (1998) thought that learning is an individual process, but that learning takes place through interactions with others, typically within a community of practice. According to Knowles (1984), adults are self-directed learners. Adult learners demand a curriculum and assignments that allow them to use their experiences to learn and assist others in their education (Knowles, 1984). In addition, an additional commonality between the two theoretical frameworks is the manner in which adults collect and interact with new experiences. When they need to solve an issue or do a task more efficiently, adults are innately driven and open to learning (Knowles, 1984). Wenger (1998) thought that adults utilize their life experiences to rethink learning in light of the situations and consequences they have encountered.

5. Conceptual Framework

Researchers think that inclusive education can work if teachers are ready to help students who have different learning needs.

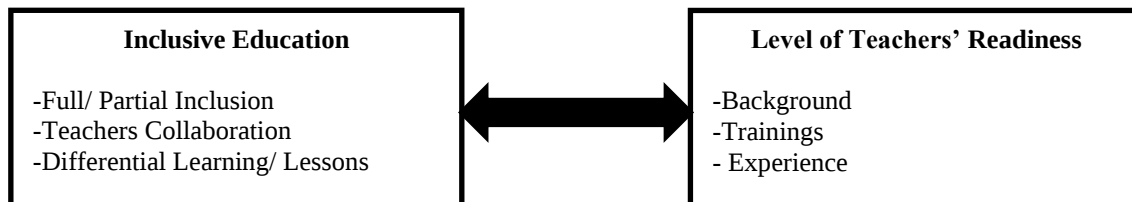


Figure 1 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

6. Research Design and Methodology

6.1 Research Design

The study will utilize descriptive-correlational and quantitative research approaches. According to Creswell (2012), the descriptive category covers correlational studies conducted in a natural setting without any attempts to introduce something new, modify, or control a phenomenon. The objective of this so-called descriptive-correlational survey is to determine the extent to which changes in one dimension of a phenomenon correlate with changes in one or more dimensions. It is to determine the relationship among two or more variables and to explore their implications for possible causation. In this context, the study was conducted to assess the inclusive education practices of General Santos City SPED Integrated School teachers in relation to their readiness.

6.2 Respondents of the Study

There were 143 respondents recommended sample size out of 225 total populations of teachers of General Santos City SPED Integrated School. Purposive sampling was utilized to determine the participants.

6.3 Data Gathering Procedure

The following procedures were strictly followed:

Step 1: A letter requesting permission to conduct the study was written to the principal of General Santos City SPED Integrated School. The letter of request was sent to her office.

Step 2: The researchers adapted a survey instrument to meet the research site and setting criteria. The instrument for the survey was approved by the owner of the tool.

Step 3: The respondents received an approved letter from the principal and survey questionnaires through Google Forms that were sent through respective group chats. Those who cannot access google forms were

given printed copies to answer the survey form. Their responses were encoded individually to get automatic results.

Step 4: The researchers gathered information from the teachers of General Santos City SPED Integrated School, analyze and used statistical tools for the results.

6.4 Data Gathering Instrument

A survey questionnaire adapted from Dapudong's MORID (Modified Opinion Relative to Integration of Students with Disabilities) (2014) The scale is a modified version of the Larrivee and Cook (1979) Opinion Relative to Integration (ORI) scale. The research tool has three parts: (1) demographic information, (2) teachers' knowledge of inclusive education, and (3) teachers' feelings about including students with special needs in regular classes.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The following table shows the gender, age, nationality, degree earned, area of specialization, years of teaching experience, classroom experience with students with disabilities, and training in special education for teachers at the General Santos City SPED Integrated School.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of General Santos City SPED Integrated School Teachers (N=143)

Profile	Frequency	Percent %
Gender		
Male	28	19.9
Female	113	80.1
No answer	2	0
Age		
< 30	34	24.3
31-40	62	44.3
41-50	34	24.3
51+	10	7.1
Nationality		
British	0	0
American	0	0
Canadian	0	0
Australian	0	0
Others (FILIPINO)	143	100
Degree Held		
Bachelor's Degree	100	71.4
Masters' Degree	33	23.6
Doctors' Degree	2	1.4
Others	8	3.6
Area of Specialization		
Special Education	15	10.7
General Education	70	50

<i>Others</i>	58	39.3
Years of Teaching Experience		
<i>Less than 1 year</i>	9	6.3
<i>1-5 years</i>	31	21.7
<i>6-10 years</i>	50	35
<i>More than 10 years</i>	53	37.1
Training in Special Education		
<i>Yes</i>	101	71.6
<i>No</i>	40	28.4
Experience in Teaching Students with Disabilities		
<i>Yes</i>	125	88
<i>No</i>	17	12

There are more women than men who answered the survey (113 vs. 28). There are 34 educators under the age of 30, 62 educators between the ages of 31 and 40, 34 educators between the ages of 41 and 50, and 10 educators 51 and up. The majority of respondents are Filipino educators with bachelor's degrees; the next largest groups are those with master's and doctoral degrees.

All 143 responses are Filipino. Here are their respective educational backgrounds: There are 100 teachers, 71.4% of whom hold a bachelor's degree, 23.6% of whom hold a master's, 1.4% of whom hold a doctorate, and 8.2% of whom hold degrees in fields other than teaching. This is in line with the demographics of the teaching staff at General Santos City SPED Integrated School, where a higher proportion of teachers hold bachelor's degrees than master's or doctoral degrees.

Seventy instructors were found to be from the field of general education (50%), while 58 were from other fields (39%). Of the remainder, 10.7 percentage points come from the area of special education. Furthermore, the majority of respondents have substantial teaching experience of more than 10 years (37.1%), followed by a group with intermediate teaching experience of between 6 and 10 years (35%). A considerable difference may be shown between those with less than a year of teaching experience (6.3% of participants) and those with more than five years of experience (21.7%).

One hundred twenty-five educators (88%) reported having taught children with disabilities in their classrooms, whereas only seventeen educators (12%) reported having no experience teaching learners with special educational needs. Also, 101 teachers (or 71.6% of the total) have had formal training or workshops in special education, while 40 teachers (or 28.4% of the total) said they had none. The researchers found out that the respondent demographic profile, training, and experience in special education are vital in this study in revealing their attitudes towards inclusion.

7.2 Level of Readiness of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education

7.2.1 Inclusive Education as an Education System for All

Based on the collected data, 103 out of 143 respondents are fully aware of Education for All (EFA). This policy is part of a global campaign and is very important for a country to become more prosperous and advanced, but 11 of the people who answered the survey didn't know much about the category that was mentioned.

Most of the people who answered the survey knew about the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999. This law says that the Thai government must give special education to people who are poor or have intellectual or physical disabilities. Special education must also be given in a way that is consistent with international and national laws that emphasize the ideas of inclusion and inclusive schooling.

As stipulated by the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education, inclusive education aims to ensure that all children have access to an appropriate, relevant, affordable, and effective education within their community. Respondents agreed unanimously that education is a basic right for all children (1994).

Teachers view inclusive education as the inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) or extra learning support needs, according to the findings. In this study, people were asked if they knew about inclusive education as a way to include students with special learning needs in regular classrooms.

7.2.2 Inclusive Education as Special Educational Needs Integration

Respondents understand "inclusive education" as the integration of students with unique educational needs. The respondents have demonstrated knowledge of the following categories: Inclusionary education is the placement of all students, including children with disabilities, in mainstream classrooms with the necessary support, and inclusive education is when an "educational environment is given the same level of scrutiny as the child in order to assess the adaptations necessary to achieve a more effective match between the child's educational needs and the instruction offered." Positively, respondents are completely aware of the categories associated with state Inclusive education is a means of providing educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. Inclusive education is an approach that aims to foster a child-centered school environment by recognizing that all students are unique individuals with different learning needs and rates. This involves integrating students with physical limitations, behavioral or academic issues, or social concerns into inclusive classes.

7.2.3 Inclusive Education as a Method for Minimizing Social Discrimination

The results of the poll also demonstrated that the respondents were aware of inclusive education as a means of minimizing social discrimination, indicating that they are familiar with this idea. Respondents scored highly on their awareness that inclusive education acts as a catalyst for change because it not only improves education within schools but also represents an increased awareness of human rights and leads to a reduction in social discrimination; inclusive education improves social interaction and inclusion among students and reduces negative stereotypes of children with special needs; and inclusive education is viewed as a system that meets the needs of students with special needs. The people who answered know that inclusion can be a great place to start when talking about children's rights in many different cultural and social settings.

7.3 Significant Relationship Between Inclusive Education and the Readiness of Teachers

The majority of respondents strongly agreed that kids with special educational needs should have equal participation opportunities in all age-appropriate school-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, field trips, clubs, school plays, community service activities, etc.). General education, special education, paraprofessionals, parents, and related support providers must plan and collaborate in order for the kid with special educational

needs to meet his or her learning objectives. Integration provides mixed-group interaction that promotes student knowledge and acceptance of their diversity. The integration of students with exceptional educational requirements fosters social autonomy. Students with special needs should be welcome in regular classes. Individualized education programs (IEPs) that include academic and functional skills (e.g., behavioral, social, communication, and life skills) needed to access the general education curriculum should be offered. General education, special education, paraprofessionals, parents, and related support providers must plan and collaborate in order for the kid with special educational needs to meet his or her learning objectives. Regular classroom teachers must have the necessary skills to work with students with special educational needs; regular classroom teachers must have adequate training to instruct students with special educational needs; the integration of students with special educational needs requires extensive retraining of regular classroom teachers; and the integration of students with special educational needs necessitates a significant change in regular classroom procedures.

In addition, the results reveal the following statements with which respondents showed agreement: Integration of children with special educational needs demands considerable retraining of regular classroom teachers; whether students whose academic achievement is two or more years below the other students in the grade level should be in regular courses requires considerable research. The academic growth of students with special educational needs is enhanced by their participation in a regular classroom. In conventional classes, students with exceptional needs develop academic abilities more swiftly than in special classrooms. It is more difficult to maintain order in a conventional classroom containing students with special educational needs than in one that does not contain such students. Learners with special needs will not consume the attention of the regular classroom teacher. Integration of kids with special needs can be advantageous for those without disabilities. Learners with special educational needs are provided with as many opportunities as possible to function in mainstream classrooms. Special education teachers are more qualified than general classroom teachers to instruct students with special educational needs. The social and emotional development of students with special educational needs is enhanced by isolation in a separate classroom. In the regular classroom, students with special education needs will not be socially isolated.

On the other hand, most people don't agree with the statement that students with special needs learn best in regular classes. Modifications to the curriculum for learners with special educational needs would be challenging to justify to other students.

And the following are areas where respondents express disagreement: The extra attention learners with special educational needs require is detrimental to other students; students who cannot control their behavior and disrupt activities should be in regular classes; the presence of learners with special educational needs will not encourage acceptance of differences among students without disabilities; learners with special educational needs create confusion in the regular classroom; and the integration is likely to have a negative effect.

Also, respondents strongly disagree with the idea that the way students with special educational needs act will set a bad example for kids who don't have disabilities.

In terms of their beliefs, the results indicate that the majority of respondents supported the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

1. Conclusion

There are more female educators than male teachers, and the majority of them are between the ages of 31 and 40. Many of them have bachelor's and master's degrees and at least ten years of relevant teaching experience. In terms of specialization, the majority of instructors are general education teachers, while only a few are from other fields or special education. Eighty-eight percent of those who answered have taught students with special needs in the classroom, and most of them have gone to training or workshops on special education.

Respondents are fully aware of inclusive education as a means of reducing social discrimination and the inclusion of students with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms, as well as inclusive education as a system of education for all that requires educating everyone regardless of race, creed, gender, or socioeconomic status. Overall, the teachers at the General Santos City SPED Integrated School know a lot about inclusive education at the city level.

Respondents have a positive attitude toward the inclusion of students with special educational needs in regular classrooms in terms of their beliefs or core perspectives on inclusion, as well as a positive attitude toward the inclusive education of students with special educational needs in terms of their feelings or anticipated outcomes of inclusion and their actions or classroom practices. Overall, the results showed that people liked the idea of inclusion. This means that the General Santos City SPED Integrated School teachers will definitely support the idea and practices of inclusive education where they are now.

The results of the study indicate that there are no differences in views among respondents when categorized according to seven criteria, including age, degree, years of teaching experience, area of expertise, classroom experience with children with disabilities, and special education training. The results suggested that only people with no special education experience, seminars, or training have a substantial impact on attitudes toward inclusion. It can be stated that it is essential to examine the respondent's demographics while attempting to ascertain their opinion about the problem.

2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is strongly suggested that schools consider the application profiles of prospective teachers during the hiring and staffing processes. In order to work in an inclusive school, teachers should be trained in special education and have experience teaching students with special needs in regular classrooms. They should also want to work with students with special needs in regular classes.

Schools must provide sufficient learning support providers and educational resources, as well as in-depth specialization courses that provide specialized practices for implementing the special education strategies in their classrooms and teaching strategies for bridging theory and practice. Individualized education plan (IEP) provisions, changes to the curriculum, and changes to the classroom that are right for students with special educational needs should be built into and used in learning support programs.

During INSET days or a Special Education Learning Action Cell (LAC) session, they could give teachers scientific research and a model for change to help show what kind of educational change or program is needed to help students with disabilities.

In addition, there is a need to establish or strengthen a Special Education Network within the Department of Education, in which a group of professionals working with students with special educational needs support

one another through the sharing of knowledge, expertise, resources, and other support services during organized workshops or conferences, termly meetings, and a unified advocacy program. The workshops can be tailored for school administrators, special education teachers, regular education teachers, teaching assistants, parents of students with special educational needs, and other stakeholders.

Future researchers may use this survey as a starting point for a quantitative study of teachers' opinions regarding inclusive education.

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