



Readiness of Regular Teachers for the Inclusion of Learners with Special Education Needs

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the level of readiness of regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with special education needs. The researcher used total population sampling to determine the study respondents. This study used the descriptive-survey method. Regular teachers were asked about their readiness to include learners with special education needs through a questionnaire with age, gender, years of teaching, and attendance at seminars as moderator variables. There were 140 items in the questionnaire and 20 items per parameter. The statistical treatment used in the study were mean and SD. The study showed that regular teachers in the Loreto district were highly prepared for inclusive education. As a result of the study, AIM, which stands for Alliance in Inclusion Movement, was developed and proposed to assist regular teachers in improving their readiness level to include learners with special education needs. Pre-service and in-service training about inclusive education was highly recommended for regular teachers. A thorough program on monitoring and evaluation by the National and Division DepEd Officials must be conducted to examine the practice of inclusive education in the country, especially in areas with no SPED Center.

INTRODUCTION

In the eighteenth century special education started to root. Special education is a type of education that is modified or specially designed instruction that meets the unusual needs of students with disabilities such as visually impaired, hearing impaired, intellectual disabilities and the like. With its implementation, there were new philosophies and ideas which necessitated changes in the educational system. One of the changes made was the implementation of inclusive education. According to Friend and Bursuck (2002), inclusion stands for the philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into general education classrooms as long as they are making progress toward the achievement of IEP goals, even if they cannot meet classroom or content demands (p.4).

In the Philippines, persons with special needs are given equal opportunities just like normal persons do. This can be affirmed in Republic Act 7277 known as Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, sustaining the full participation and the total integration of persons with disabilities into the mainstream society. Thus, the practice of inclusive education in the country has become increasingly accepted over the years. Nevertheless, despite the increased awareness, the inclusion of learners with SENs in the regular classroom continues to be an uphill battle, with just 3-5 percent of children with disabilities of school age currently accessing educational opportunities (Foundation for International Training, 2002).

In Agusan del Sur, there are six Special Education centers serving the needs of children with disabilities. However, in the municipality of Loreto, there is no Special Education Center yet although there is one central school, and that is, Loreto Central Elementary School (LCES) which has already a SPED Program that caters the learners with SENs but it only caters those who have nearer access and those who can afford to send their children to school.

Based on the interview conducted by the researcher to the SPED teacher in LCES, there are only fifteen officially enrolled learners with SENS in the SPED Program of the said school under the following categories: visual impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI), and intellectual disabilities (ID). There are two teachers, one is a certified teacher of VI learners while the other is a regular teacher who is designated to teach learners with hearing impairment. Generally, it is not known how many learners with SENs are there in the entire Loreto district for the reason that others did not let their children be listed in the record while others also were not listed due to limited access and they came mostly from the far-flung and restricted areas.

As observed by the researcher, there are no elementary schools especially those in the nearby and far-flung barangays that practiced inclusive education where learners with SENs might not have access to education in the central school that has a SPED program due to distance and lack of financial support by the parents as well to sustain their studies for the reason that most them belong to low-income families. Thus, there are learners with special education needs (SENs) who are just in their respective homes and are not able to exercise their right to education. Moreover, there is also a need for further evaluation as

to the status of those children who attended self-contained classes who are now able or qualified to be accepted in the regular classroom setting with inclusive curriculum. It is not clearly observed if these kinds of learners are now included in the regular classroom setting.

In order to disseminate the idea of inclusion, particularly in the municipality of Loreto, the researcher was motivated to conduct this study. Teachers need to be prepared to take the roles as mentors of heterogeneous classes that can accommodate learners with special education needs. For the district to realize this, there is a need for teachers with knowledge and competencies on Special Education and more importantly, teachers who have the right attitudes towards these learners with SENs.

It is the aim of this study to know the readiness of regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with special education needs in Loreto District. In addition, it is the ardent hope of the researcher that the results of the study will contribute to the readiness of regular teachers in the inclusion of learners with SENs in this part of Agusan del Sur.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Peters (2003) observed that inclusive education being implemented at different levels embraces different goals and is based on a range of varied motives. Inclusive education operates on the principle that almost all children start in a general classroom. Moreover, the concept places emphasis on changing the system as a whole than the child. It needs a shift in the educational system, a shift in structure and practice to a more flexible, more collaborative and more inclusive setup to accommodate all children.

Many schools in different countries have experienced good results from inclusive training, as well as resistance to inclusion is diminishing in many areas of education. School teachers have observed that inclusion of learners with special education needs (SENs) in the classroom has a useful contribution to classroom diversity.

While the majority of educators considered inclusive education to be ethically and also morally sound, several critics who are also educators questioned the effectiveness of its implementation for they usually found it difficult to adjust conventional methods of instructional evaluation to satisfy the needs and also issues and concerns of learners. Teachers who lacked experience and trainings needed to understand the individual needs and abilities of children with disabilities. (Ainscow, 2003)

METHODOLOGY

This part presents the research design, participants, the setting of the study, the instruments, the data gathering procedure and data analysis.

Research Design

The researcher used the descriptive-survey method to determine the readiness of regular teachers for inclusion of children with special education needs by noting significant statistics that was derived through qualitative

description. It is descriptive in nature because it gathers information about present existing conditions. Furthermore, it describes the nature of the present situation. A questionnaire was filled up by the regular teachers to identify their readiness for inclusion.

Participants of the Study

The researcher utilized the total population sampling in determining the participants in the study. There are forty (40) elementary schools in Loreto district. However, the elementary schools that were included in the study are only those first nine (9) big schools. The respondents of this study were the regular teachers in the said nine (9) big schools. One hundred twenty regular teachers were involved in the study; twenty-Elementary School; fifteen (15) from Nueva Gracia Elementary School; twelve (12) from Magaud Elementary School; twelve (12) from Paciencia Elementary School; ten (10) from Waloe Elementary School; nine (9) from Manawe Elementary School; seven (7) from Kasapa Elementary School; and seven (7) from Guitas Elementary School participated in this study.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in the municipality of Loreto, one of the 13 municipalities in Agusan del Sur located along the river banks. It is bounded on the north by the municipality of La Paz, in the northeast by the municipality of Bunawan, in the southeast by the municipality of Veruela. The Provinces of Bukidnon and Davao del Norte bound its Western and Southern portion. The municipality is inhabited by mostly Manobo. Other ethnic groups comprising the demography are Cebuano, Ilonggo, and Karay-a. Farming is the main source of living by most of the people living in the community.

Specifically, the study was administered in the elementary schools in Loreto district. The district is divided into two districts, the Loreto North District and Loreto South District with 18 elementary schools in the former district and 22 elementary schools in the latter and has a total of 40 elementary schools. However, the study was conducted only in the nine (9) identified big elementary schools of the district of Loreto which has 250 or more population, namely: Loreto Central Elementary School, 874; Sto. Tomas Elementary School with 704 total population; Nueva Gracia Elementary School, 481; Magaud Elementary School, 480; Paciencia Elementary School, 453; Waloe Elementary School, 366; Manawe Elementary School, 319; Kasapa Elementary School, 287; and Guitas Elementary School with a total population of 257, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the data gathered in this study for the purpose of descriptive and statistical analysis and interpretation of findings. The discussion of the topics are presented in the following subtitles: Profile of Teachers, Level of Readiness of Regular Teachers for the Inclusion of Learners with SENs and Significance of the Difference on the Level of Readiness of Regular Teachers when grouped according to their profile.

Level of Readiness of Regular Teachers for the Inclusion of Learners with SENs

In Terms of Knowledge of Inclusion. This is one of the parameters of inclusion that is being studied as regards the level of readiness of regular teachers.

Table 1

Level of Readiness in Terms of Knowledge of Inclusion

	Knowledge of Inclusion	Mean	Descriptive Level
1	I am aware that inclusive education is practiced in the country.	4.25	High
2	I have an idea that learners with special education needs should be integrated in regular classes.	3.91	High
3	As a regular education teacher, I am one of the significant persons to formulate the learning objectives for learners with special education needs (SENs).	4.08	High
4	With inclusion, I can ask help from other professionals in school in the formulation of Individualized Education Plan (IEP).	3.95	High
5	I know that learners with special education needs can best learn with their peers.	4.21	High
6	I am familiar with the different methods in assessing learners so I can identify those with SENs.	3.65	High
7	I abide with the mandate of the Philippine Magna Carta for Disabled Persons that affirms the full participation and total integration of persons with disabilities.	4.06	High
8	As a teacher, with or without the training in special education, I am expected to teach diverse pupils in every class.	4.18	High
9	I know that there is a collaboration of parents, teachers, and school personnel in an inclusive set up.	4.18	High
10	I am willing to attend additional trainings to broaden my knowledge about education of children with disabilities.	4.48	High
11	I am aware that inclusive education is very important and necessary for social development of students with SENs.	4.29	High
12	I conform with DECS Order No. 26, s 1997 (Institutionalization of SPED Programs in all schools) with an open heart and mind.	4.33	High
13	I agree that inclusion is a means of providing all students with or without SENs appropriate educational programs.	4.25	High
14	I affirm that inclusive education preferably takes place in a regular school nearest to the learners.	4.18	High
15	I believe that inclusion involves changes in philosophy, curriculum, structural organization and teaching strategy.	4.18	High
16	I agree that inclusion means classroom communities that embrace diversity and differences among students.	4.19	High
17	I believe that inclusion involves planning.	4.35	High
18	I know that inclusion can reduce fear of human difference and increase comfort to the learners with SENs.	4.23	High
19	I am aware that inclusion prepares and supports teachers to teach interactively.	4.22	High
20	I agree that inclusion is a right and not a privilege.	4.15	High
	Overall Mean	4.190	High

In Terms of Educational Preparation.

This is another parameter of inclusion included in the study as regards the level of readiness of regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs. Presented in Table 2 is the level of readiness of regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs according to educational preparation.

Table 2
Level of Readiness in Terms of Educational Preparation

	Educational Preparation	Mean	Descriptive Level
21	I am teaching learners with special education needs this school year.	2.24	Low
22	I have a bachelor's degree in Special Education.	2.26	Low
23	I have earned units in Master of Education in Exceptional Children/Special Education.	2.15	Low
24	I am conferred with a degree in Master of Education in Exceptional Children/Special Education.	2.15	Low
25	I am presently handling an advisory class with SEN learners.	2.07	Low
26	I have handled learners with special education needs in the past.	2.49	Low
27	I am handling a heterogeneous class.	3.37	Moderate
28	I have attended seminars on dealing with learners with special education needs.	2.27	Low
29	I have attended meetings/conferences related to inclusion of learners with Special Education needs.	2.27	Low
30	I join field trips to schools that cater learners with Special Education needs.	2.09	Low
31	I attended pre-service trainings for teaching learners with Special Education needs.	2.14	Low
32	I am aware that learners with SEN can benefit from an inclusive set-up.	3.16	Moderate
33	As a teacher, I am expected to teach diverse kinds of pupils in my class.	3.68	High
34	I am familiar with the different categories of disabilities.	3.22	Moderate
35	I am aware of the characteristics of different disability types.	3.33	Moderate
36	I can use various techniques of behavior change.	3.18	Moderate
37	I am well-informed on educational materials for learners with Special Education needs.	2.89	Moderate
38	I practice different teaching strategies for learners with Special Education needs.	2.72	Moderate
39	I have background on setting up physical arrangement appropriate to learners.	2.86	Moderate
40	I know that there are different phases of inclusion.	3.09	Moderate
	Overall Mean	2.70	Moderate

In Terms of Attitudes towards Learners with SENs

This is another parameter in the study that concerns the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs. Presented in Table 3 on the next page is the level of readiness in terms of their attitude towards learners with SENs.

Table 3

Level of Readiness in Terms of Attitudes towards Learners with SENs

	Attitudes Towards Learners with SENs	Mean	Descriptive Level
41	I feel I can easily cope with the instructional needs of children with disabilities.	3.46	Moderate
42	I feel that the children with disabilities benefit from the interaction with children in a regular classroom.	3.68	High
43	I feel that normal children benefit from the integration of children with disabilities in a regular classroom.	3.55	High
44	I feel that children with disabilities are socially acceptable to their peers.	3.83	High
45	I can facilitate the learning benefits of children with disabilities.	3.48	Moderate
46	I feel that I can manage the behavior of children with disabilities.	3.48	Moderate
47	I like to have children with disabilities in my class.	3.18	Moderate
48	I sympathize children with disabilities who suffer humiliation from their peers.	4.07	High
49	I should have time to deal children with disabilities in the class.	3.71	High
50	It is my duty to improve the acceptance of students without SENs in the class.	4.08	High
51	I believe every individual is teachable and has a potential learning capacity.	4.25	High
52	I believe that the students with disabilities can succeed more in an inclusive setting.	3.93	High
53	I believe that a cooperative learning environment would promote socialization among my students.	4.16	High
54	I believe I can adapt curricula and instructional methods according to individual student needs.	4.14	High
55	I believe a child should learn new tasks independently.	4.21	High
56	I believe I can manage to handle a learner whatever disabling condition s/he has.	3.83	High
57	I believe I should not be selective of who should be in my class.	4.16	High
58	I believe that every child should be afforded with adequate and appropriate education.	4.33	High
59	I believe there is a need for proper assessment of learners with SENs.	4.34	High
60	I believe that as a teacher I should continuously encourage learners to give their best.	4.51	High
	Overall Mean	3.94	High

In Terms of Instructional Competence

This is another parameter that is being studied as regards the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs. Presented in Table 4 on the following page is the level of readiness in terms of instructional competence.

Table 4
Level of Readiness in Terms of Instructional Competence

	Instructional Competence	Mean	Descriptive Level
	As a teacher or would-be teacher of learners with SENs, I am capable of :		
61	informally assessing the skills of students rather than relying solely on standardized curriculum.	3.88	High
62	promoting children's individual interests.	4.18	High
63	setting alternative expectations that are suitable for the students.	4.13	High
64	making appropriate expectations for each student.	4.08	High
65	determining how to modify home assignments for students.	4.14	High
66	valuing all kinds of skills that students bring to class and not just the academic skills.	4.26	High
67	providing opportunities of daily success for all students.	4.17	High
68	adapting materials and rewriting objectives for a child's specific needs.	4.04	High
69	using a variety of instructional strategies effectively.	4.10	High
70	providing opportunities for student development in the learning process.	4.34	High
71	providing more activity-based teaching than seat-based teaching.	3.98	High
72	coping with work-related stresses and use them as motivating factor.	3.91	High
73	praising a student when s/he deserves it.	4.31	High
74	utilizing whatever resources are available that fit to the learning situation.	4.11	High
75	using my own internal motivation for developing needed skills.	4.10	High
76	making it explicit that in my classroom I value all skills even if that is not the philosophy of the school.	3.88	High
77	designing classroom activities so that all students can participate.	4.06	High
78	being flexible and have maximum tolerance for ambiguity.	4.03	High
79	viewing each child in the class as an opportunity to become a better teacher rather than a problem.	4.18	High
80	realizing that every child in the class is my responsibility.	4.33	High
	Mean	4.13	High

In Terms of Social Competence

This concerns another parameter being studied as regards the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs. Presented in Table 5 on the following page is the level of readiness in terms of social competence.

Table 5
Level of Readiness in terms of Social Competence

	Social Competence	Mean	Descriptive Level
81	I network with other agencies in the community.	3.33	Moderate
82	I work in a team with parents to learn what skills a child	3.61	High

	needs to develop while in school.		
83	I consult professionals, medical doctors/practitioners, health workers, and the like for the betterment of the service rendered.	3.36	Moderate
84	I affiliate in different associations working with persons with disabilities.	3.21	Moderate
85	I advocate for the prevention of disability during community meeting.	3.30	Moderate
86	I enthusiastically lead any activity for the pupils outside the school.	3.39	Moderate
87	I tap resources from benefactors in the community.	3.33	Moderate
88	I am interested in becoming a member of professional groups.	3.83	High
89	I have vigor to join community-based activities for the benefit of my students.	3.89	High
90	I humbly accept help extended by colleagues in the profession.	3.97	High
91	I am working in a team with other teachers to learn and provide the best teaching approach.	3.71	High
92	I work collaboratively with the academic community to develop clear and measurable goals and objectives for the school and students.	3.73	High
93	I am proficient in oral and written communication.	3.75	High
94	I foster respect between parents/guardians, school personnel and people in the community.	4.13	High
95	I collaborate with pupils in various learning environments.	3.95	High
96	I communicate and collaborate effectively with paraprofessionals to deliver educational services.	3.83	High
97	I encourage and assist parents/guardians to become active in their children's education.	3.93	High
98	I plan and conduct collaborative conferences with parents/guardians.	3.65	High
99	I initiate the integration of individuals with disabilities into various learning environments.	3.49	Moderate
100	I serve as a resource person for various trainings and conferences in the community.	3.28	Moderate
	Overall Mean	3.66	High

In Terms of Behavior Management Strategy

This is one of the parameters being included in the study as regards the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs. Presented in Table 4.2.6 on the following page is the level of readiness in terms of behavior management strategy.

Table 6*Level of Readiness in Terms of Behavior Management Strategy*

	Behavior Management Strategy	Mean	Descriptive Level
101	I can apply a variety of effective behavior management techniques appropriate in a class.	3.85	High
102	I prioritize the implementation of positive interventions consistent with the needs of learners.	3.90	High
103	I make realistic expectations of social behavior in various settings.	3.98	High
104	I use effective teaching procedures to include social skills in curricular activities.	3.93	High
105	I teach ways to increase self-awareness, self-control, self-reliance, and self-confidence of learners.	3.99	High
106	I design instructional programs that enhance an individual's social participation in family, school, and community activities.	3.78	High
107	I develop, implement, and evaluate behavior crisis-management plans in educational settings.	3.63	High
108	I modify learning environments (e.g. schedule, physical arrangement) to promote appropriate behaviors.	3.83	High
109	I avoid confrontations and power struggles.	3.93	High
110	I identify qualified peer role models.	3.82	High
111	I give immediate feedback and reinforcements.	3.82	High
112	I develop a behavior intervention plan that is realistic and doable.	3.76	High
113	I enforce a code of conduct for the classroom and display it where all students can see, review, and be reminded from time to time.	3.82	High
114	I have identified and designated a safe place where students can go in time of emergency.	3.73	High
115	I ignore attention-seeking behaviors that are not disruptive to other members of the class.	3.61	High
116	I modify rules that may discriminate against students with neurological disorders.	3.76	High
117	I devised a system or code that reminds students when behavior is not appropriate.	3.76	High
118	I provide acceptable reinforcements to a particular child when needed.	3.83	High
119	I implement instructional programs that provide opportunities for enhancing learners' social development.	3.78	High
120	I sustain instructional programs that enhance learners' social participation.	3.77	High
	Overall Mean	3.84	High

In Terms of Knowledge of Assessment

This is one of the parameters being added in the study as regards the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs. Presented in Table 7 on the following page is the level of readiness in terms of knowledge of assessment.

Table 7
Level of Readiness in Terms of Knowledge of Assessment

	Knowledge of Assessment	Mean	Descriptive Level
121	I know the different methods in assessing my students with SENs.	3.61	High
122	I find it easy to identify the present condition of learners with SENs by just looking at their physical appearance.	3.53	High
123	In assessing my learners, I prefer more to know what students do than to know what their characteristics are.	3.68	High
124	I conform to the assessment provisions mandated by R.A. 7277 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons) with open-mindedness.	3.69	High
125	I believe that related services must be given based on the results of assessment.	3.88	High
126	I believe that it is not only my sole duty to assess my student; I am aware that I should refer a certain child to other expert or to the developmental doctor for eligible and further assessment.	3.96	High
127	I can use various techniques in assessing my students with SENs.	3.69	High
128	As a teacher, I am expected to give assessment to my students with SENs.	3.87	High
129	I know that the assessment tool that I am going to give to my learners must not be biased and discriminatory.	3.97	High
130	I can easily assess the social characteristics of my students with SENs through informal observation.	3.70	High
131	I am aware of the disabilities of my learners based on their behavior/attitudes in the class.	3.87	High
132	I believe that learners with SENs can benefit from the assessment made by the teacher.	3.99	High
133	I know that assessment involves several processes before a child can be diagnosed with a particular disability or exceptional needs.	4.03	High
134	I am aware that assessment helps students with SENs to be eligible for admission in special education.	3.93	High
135	I affirm that assessment instruments must be reliable and valid at all times.	3.94	High
136	I know that assessment activities differ in their directness and in the nature of inferences made.	3.87	High
137	I am aware that assessment tools vary depending on the needs of my students.	3.91	High
138	I believe that assessment is very important for the purpose of making decisions for my learners.	3.95	High
139	I know that evaluation for special education must be made by a multidisciplinary team.	3.88	High
140	I agree that there is a collaboration of parents, teachers, and school personnel in the making of decisions based on the results of the assessment.	4.03	High
	Overall Mean	3.88	High

Summary of the Level of Readiness of Regular Teachers for the Inclusion of Learners with SENs

Table 8 on the following page presents the summary on the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs throughout the seven parameters of inclusion.

Table 8

Summary of the Level of Readiness of Regular Teachers for the Inclusion of Learners with SENs

	Parameters of Inclusion	Mean	Descriptive Level
1	Knowledge of Inclusion	4.19	High
2	Educational Preparation	2.70	Moderate
3	Attitudes Towards Learners with SENs	3.94	High
4	Instructional Competence	4.13	High
5	Social Competence	3.66	High
6	Behavior Management Strategy	3.84	High
7	Knowledge of Assessment	3.88	High
	OVERALL	3.76	High

The table above shows that the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs was high with the parameters on knowledge of inclusion got the highest rating with the mean score of 4.19 followed by instructional competence with the mean score of 4.13. The other parameters such as attitudes of learners with SENs, social competence, behavior management strategy and knowledge of assessment show that they follow high descriptive level with their mean scores of 3.94, 3.66, 3.84, and 3.88, respectively.

While on the other hand, the level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs in terms of educational preparation was only moderate with the mean score equivalent to 2.70. This means that teachers need the necessary training and/or seminars that are related to SPED.

The overall level of readiness of the regular teachers for the inclusion of learners with SENs was high with the mean score of 3.76. This confirms to the result of the study conducted by Narquita (2008) that the regular teachers showed high level of readiness for the inclusion of learners with SENs in terms of the six parameters of inclusion other than educational preparation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research on "Regular Teachers' Readiness for the Inclusion of Learners with Special Educational Needs," some important conclusions can be drawn. First, the majority of regular teachers are not fully prepared to face the challenges of inclusion of learners with special education needs. This is reflected in their limited knowledge of learning strategies that can support the success of children with special needs in the regular classroom.

In addition, the research findings also show that some teachers feel a lack of support and specialized training related to inclusion. Some teachers may feel less confident in managing the needs of diverse learners in the regular classroom.

This can have a negative impact on the learning experience of children with special education needs.

Suggestion:

Training and professional development: Governments and education institutions should increase efforts to provide training and professional development for regular teachers on inclusion. This training should include learning strategies that can be adapted to the needs of diverse learners.

Support and Resources: Adequate support needs to be provided, both in the form of specialized educators and additional learning resources. This will help regular teachers manage the diversity of learners in their classrooms more effectively.

FURTHER STUDY

This Study aimed to developed to seek the views of the regular teachers as regards inclusive education and to provide a more positive attitudes in dealing learners with SENs. This aims to help the regular teachers to gain more knowledge about inclusion and provide them worthwhile, relevant and responsive activities to overcome their fear and weaknesses and to further develop their strengths in teaching and handling learners with SENs.

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