

Secondary Teachers and Administrators' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

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Abstract

This study investigates high school teachers' and administrators' attitudes towards Inclusive Education in the Philippines, focusing on factors such as teaching experience, gender, highest educational attainment, and expertise in special education. Utilizing a quantitative approach, surveys were administered to a diverse sample from Region VIII, including Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Samar. Findings reveal diverse attitudes influenced by demographic and professional characteristics, with notable concerns about the adequacy of training and support for special education. Regression analysis highlighted teaching experience, gender, and expertise in special education as significant factors shaping attitudes. While experienced teachers and those with higher expertise levels exhibited fewer positive attitudes, male teachers tended to hold more favorable views. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions and professional development to foster positive attitudes and support Inclusive Education. By addressing training gaps and promoting legal understanding, educational institutions can develop inclusive learning environments that accommodate all students, thereby enhancing equity and providing greater access to quality education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, quantitative approach, Likert scale, learning environment, professional development.

Introduction

In the global context, inclusive education is increasingly recognized as a fundamental right and a cornerstone of quality education for all. However, its implementation faces significant challenges worldwide. According to UNESCO, an estimated 93 million children globally have some form of disability, and many of them do not have access to quality education (Unicef, 2021). In the Philippines, a country characterized by cultural diversity and socioeconomic disparities, the challenge of inclusive education is particularly acute. Despite legislative efforts such as the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities and the Enhanced

Basic Education Act of 2013, which mandate inclusive practices in education, there remains a gap between policy and practice, especially at the high school level. Therefore, “all children” of school age without exception should receive education services at the school that is close to their place of residence (Iswari & Murni, 2020).

Inclusive Education is rooted in the principles of equality and equity (Cerna et al., 2021) It recognizes that everyone has the right to access quality education regardless of their differences or disabilities. It also celebrates diversity and acknowledges the unique strengths, abilities, and backgrounds of each student. It values differences in culture, language, socioeconomic status, and learning styles. Although the incorporation of inclusive education has been a challenge in the implementation. According to Alsace (2022), as special education advances into the 21st century, educators are confronted with the never-ending challenge of providing for the individual needs of their students. Both special and regular education instructors are increasingly questioning established practices and beliefs surrounding effective teaching methods. With the ongoing implementation of educational reforms and initiatives, diversity within general education classrooms is on the rise. As inclusive schooling practices become more prevalent, there is a growing imperative for collaborative efforts across the entire school community. Addressing the varied needs of students necessitates service delivery approaches that promote collaboration between special education and general education teachers (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017). However, a notable gap in the literature is the lack of research that investigates these factors comprehensively within a single setting. This gap underscores the uniqueness of the proposed study, which aims to address this limitation by examining how teaching experience, gender, highest educational attainment, and level of expertise in special education intersect to shape teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Philippine high schools. By filling this gap, the study seeks to provide a more holistic understanding of the factors influencing attitudes toward inclusion and their implications for educational practice and policy in the Philippines.

The purpose of this study is to rigorously investigate high school teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward inclusion in the Philippines, aiming to determine if these attitudes significantly differ across various factors such as teaching experience, gender, highest educational attainment, and level of expertise in special education. To achieve this objective, a quantitative approach will be employed, utilizing surveys administered to a diverse sample of high school teachers and administrators across different regions and socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings of this study can serve as a basis for developing targeted interventions and professional development programs tailored to address the specific needs and concerns of high school teachers in the Philippines. By equipping educators with the knowledge, skills, and support necessary to foster inclusive learning environments, this research has the potential to contribute to the advancement of Inclusive Education practices and the promotion of greater equity and access to quality education for all students.

Research Objectives

This research aimed to assess the extent of the high school teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward Inclusive Education.

Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To characterize the teachers' and administrators' perception level of Inclusive Education;
2. To determine if the teachers' and administrators' perception level of Inclusive Education depends on their profile in terms of:
 - 2.1 Teaching experience;
 - 2.2 Gender;
 - 2.3. Professional Responsibility;

- 2.4 Highest Educational Attainment, and;
- 2.5 Level of Expertise in Special Education.

Literature Review

Drawing upon Social Learning Theory by Bandura, teaching experience serves as a proxy for exposure to inclusive practices. According to this theory, individuals learn attitudes and behaviors through observation, modeling, and reinforcement. More experienced teachers may have had greater opportunities to observe and learn from inclusive teaching models, thus potentially developing more positive attitudes towards inclusion compared to their less experienced counterparts (Bandura & Walters, 1977). Voltz et al. (2010), pointed out that through exposure to diverse classroom environments and pedagogical approaches, experienced teachers may internalize inclusive values and strategies, influencing their attitudes toward accommodating diverse learners. Gender norms and expectations within society may influence educators' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in fostering inclusive classroom environments, ultimately shaping their attitudes toward diversity and inclusion (Juvonen et al., 2019).

According to the literature, for the implementation of inclusion, the attitudes towards inclusive education as well as the perception of inclusive teaching practices and resources are key factors. Within this paper, these three aspects are examined from the parents' view (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Some debates were raised regarding inclusive education being mixed up in a formal education setup. Acedo et al. (2009), identified some key debates on inclusive education: Should teaching methods be adapted to students' needs? Does Inclusive Education inherently involve increased involvement from families and community networks in the educational process? Are resources the key to the development of Inclusive Education policies? What responsibilities should the state and public education authorities undertake in promoting Inclusive Education? Inadequate funding, barriers to inclusive education, overcoming barriers, and "inclusion may not be beneficial for all students". Essentially, an individual's perspective or conviction about something is believed to affect their actions, deeds, and sense of effectiveness. Similarly, the attitudes and convictions harbored by educators, administrators, and other school staff concerning inclusion and the academic abilities of students with disabilities can impact the educational settings within schools and the provision of fair learning opportunities for all students (Boyle et al., 2013). In the best of worlds (where factors outside of education which sustain inequality are not challenging), and if the education provided meets established standards of quality, children leave an Inclusive Education system (Shaeffer, 2019).

Methodology

The study utilized Quantitative research design employed with statistical analysis, Multiple Regression to analyze the attitudes of the teachers and administrators on inclusive education in selected schools in Region VIII. This method analyzed the attitudes of teachers and administrators in Leyte, Southern Leyte, and Samar. Specifically, it analyzed the profile in terms of Teaching experience, Gender, Professional Responsibility, Highest Educational Attainment, and Level of expertise in Special Education to the attitudes of the respondents toward Inclusive Education.

Research Respondents and Sampling Procedure

A total of 30 respondents participated in the study. These respondents were selected through a simple random sampling procedure, with 10 teachers or administrators randomly chosen from each of the three selected public secondary schools in Region VIII: Sogod National High School in Southern Leyte, Sta Rita National High School in Samar, and

Justimbaste Remandaban National High School in Tabontabon, Leyte. The randomly selected teachers and administrators utilized the adapted survey questionnaire on the attitude toward Inclusive Education.

Research Instrument

This study utilized one adapted instrument to gather data pertinent to this study. The instrument was adapted from Reusen, A.K., et al (2000). It comprises two parts; the first part of the survey was designed to elicit respondents' demographic profiles and background information across five areas. These areas included each respondent's years of teaching experience, gender, professional responsibility, highest educational degree attained, and level of expertise in Special Education. The second part of the survey included twenty (20) items in constructed form. Each statement used a four-point Likert type scale that allowed the participant to select the degree of intensity that best described the respondents' feelings about the statement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree). Ten of the statements were positive and the other ten were negative. Higher response scores on the survey represented a more positive attitude toward Inclusive Education.

Data Gathering and Analysis Procedure

The data gathering procedure for this quantitative research endeavor begins with securing necessary approvals and permissions from relevant authorities, such as school heads. Following this, the adapted survey instrument was administered in person, with clear instructions provided for completion and a defined deadline set for responses. Data collected was managed securely, with unique identifiers assigned to maintain anonymity. Quantitative analysis techniques, including descriptive and inferential statistics used such as Multiple Regression Analysis to identify the associations between variables occurring in some data. It can show both the magnitude of such an association and determine its statistical significance on the teachers' and administrators' attitudes toward Inclusive Education in terms of teaching experience Gender, Professional Responsibility, Highest Educational Attainment, and Level of expertise in Special Education. Then employed to analyze survey responses, exploring patterns and relationships across different demographic groups. Finally, the findings are interpreted, implications are discussed, and a comprehensive report is prepared for dissemination to the school head and stakeholders.

Results

Table 1 Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Teaching Experience (Years)</i>		
0 – 4	4	13.3
5 – 10	9	30.0
11 – 15	14	46.7
16 and above	3	10.0
Sex		
Female	18	60.0
Male	12	40.0
Professional Responsibility		
Administrator	5	16.7
Teacher	22	73.3
Staff	3	10.0

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Field of Specialization		
Career and Technology	1	3.3
Computer	2	6.7
English/ Filipino	7	23.3
Mathematics	5	16.7
Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health	4	13.3
Science	3	10.0
Social Science/ Government	3	10.0
Others	5	16.7
Highest Educational Attainment		
Baccalaureate	5	16.7
Masters	17	56.7
Doctorate	8	26.7
Expertise Level in Special Education		
None	8	26.7
Minimal	10	33.3
Adequate	9	30.0
High	3	10.0

The table presents a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics and professional attributes of the participants involved in the study. Each variable provides insights into the composition of the sample and sheds light on the diversity within the group of high school teachers surveyed. The variable of teaching experience reveals a varied distribution among the participants. A considerable portion of the teachers fall within the range of 11 to 15 years of teaching experience, comprising 46.7% of the sample. This suggests a significant presence of mid-career educators in the study. Meanwhile, teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience account for 30.0% of the sample, followed by those with 0 to 4 years at 13.3%, and those with 16 years and above at 10.0%. This distribution indicates a balanced representation across different stages of teaching careers. Regarding gender representation, most of the participants are female, comprising 60.0% of the sample, while male teachers make up the remaining 40.0%.

The gender distribution reflects the general trend observed in the teaching profession, where female educators often outnumber their male counterparts. In terms of professional responsibility, the data indicate that most of the participants hold the role of a teacher, constituting 73.3% of the sample. Meanwhile, administrators account for 16.7%, and staff members represent 10.0%. The distribution highlights the predominance of teaching roles among the surveyed high school educators.

The field of specialization among the participants showcases a diverse range of subject areas. English/Filipino emerges as the most common specialization, with 23.3% of the sample, followed by Mathematics at 16.7%, and Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health and Science at 13.3% each. Other specializations, including Career and Technology, Computer, and Social Science/Government, each contribute to varying degrees, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of the teaching staff. In terms of educational attainment, most of the participants hold a master's degree, comprising 56.7% of the sample. Those with a bachelor's degree account for 16.7%, while those with a doctorate represent 26.7%. The

distribution suggests a high level of academic qualification among the surveyed educators. However, the expertise level in special education among the participants demonstrates a range of proficiencies. A notable proportion of teachers indicate minimal expertise in special education, constituting 33.3% of the sample, followed by those with adequate expertise at 30.0%. Meanwhile, 26.7% report having none, and 10.0% claim a high level of expertise. This highlights the varying levels of preparedness and training among high school teachers in addressing the needs of special education students.

Table 2 Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
1. My lack of special education training hinders my ability to teach special needs students effectively.	2.73	0.87	Agree
2. Teachers should be required to take more special education courses during undergraduate training.	3.20	0.89	Agree
3. All special needs students should be included in the regular classroom no matter what the disability.	2.17	0.87	Disagree
4. Special education students have a negative impact upon the learning environment of my classroom.	2.27	0.83	Disagree
5. The presence of special education students in my regular class has cost me to reduce the amount of curriculum content I should normally cover during a school year.	2.37	0.81	Disagree
6. My undergraduate teacher education program prepared me adequately for teaching special education students.	2.23	0.97	Disagree
7. There are disabilities that are inappropriate for the regular classroom.	2.77	0.90	Agree
8. I have an instructional background to teach inclusion students effectively.	2.53	0.68	Agree
9. Teacher effectiveness is compromised by the amount of preparation required for placement of special needs students into the regular classroom.	2.70	0.88	Agree
10. Special education students are socially well adjusted in the classroom.	2.43	0.86	Disagree
11. The number of special education students in a particular class affects the teacher's effectiveness for the class.	2.67	0.76	Agree
12. The presence of special education students in my regular classes has minimal effect upon my implementation of curriculum content	2.77	0.63	Agree
13. Students with disruptive behavior are usually special education students.	2.40	0.89	Disagree
14. My knowledge of special education laws is limited.	2.80	0.81	Agree

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
15. The inclusion of special education students affects the learning climate of my classroom.	2.50	0.73	Agree
16. I can be effective with special education students in my classes.	2.33	0.84	Disagree
17. Other classmates socially reject disruptive special education students.	2.73	0.58	Agree
18. Special education students behave like regular education students.	2.70	0.60	Agree
19. I have adequate preparation time for special needs students placed into the regular classroom.	2.57	0.90	Agree
20. Start education teachers are informed about special education laws.	2.87	1.11	Agree
Overall	2.59	0.82	Agree

The agreed indicators reflect teachers' collective views on Inclusive Education. They recognize the impact of their lack of special education training (Mean = 2.73, SD = 0.87) and advocate for more specialized courses during undergraduate training (Mean = 3.20, SD = 0.89). Teachers feel their effectiveness is compromised by the preparation required for special needs students (Mean = 2.70, SD = 0.88) and they also believe certain disabilities are not suitable for regular classrooms (Mean = 2.77, SD = 0.90). Much express limited knowledge of special education laws (Mean = 2.80, SD = 0.81). They acknowledge the social impact of including special education students in regular classrooms (Mean = 2.50, SD = 0.73), noting both rejection and similarities in behavior (Mean = 2.73, SD = 0.58 and Mean = 2.70, SD = 0.60, respectively). Teachers stress the need for informed starting education about special education laws (Mean = 2.87, SD = 1.11). These findings emphasize the necessity of better training, legal understanding, and social support to create inclusive learning environments.

The disagreed indicators reveal areas where teachers hold contrasting views on Inclusive Education. They disagree that all special needs students should be included in regular classrooms, regardless of disability (Mean = 2.17, SD = 0.87). Similarly, they do not believe special education students have a negative impact on the classroom environment (Mean = 2.27, SD = 0.83), nor do they think the presence of such students affects curriculum coverage (Mean = 2.37, SD = 0.81). Moreover, there is disagreement about the adequacy of undergraduate teacher education programs in preparing teachers for teaching special education students (Mean = 2.23, SD = 0.97). Additionally, teachers disagree that students with disruptive behavior are usually special education students (Mean = 2.40, SD = 0.89). Lastly, they express doubt regarding their effectiveness with special education students in their classes (Mean = 2.33, SD = 0.84). These findings indicate areas of divergence in teachers' perceptions about the impact and challenges of Inclusive Education, suggesting the need for further support in these areas.

Table 3 Regression Model for the Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education

Model	Standardized Coefficients	t	p - value
Teaching Experience	- 0.382	-2.572	0.017
Sex	0.397	2.190	0.039
Professional Responsibility	-0.330	-1.694	0.104
Field of Specialization	-0.315	-1.541	0.137
Highest Educational Attainment	-0.196	-0.983	0.336
Expertise Level in Special Education	-0.354	-2.002	0.057

$R^2 = 0.615$, $F = 6.119$, $p - \text{value} < 0.01$

The regression model presented in Table 3 examines the relationships between various independent variables and teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education. The dependent variable, teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education, is represented by the standardized coefficients for each independent variable. The overall model fit is significant ($R^2=0.615$, $F=6.119$, $p<0.01$), indicating that the independent variables collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variance in teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education. This suggests that teaching experience, gender, and expertise level in special education are particularly influential factors in shaping attitudes towards Inclusive Education among high school teachers.

Teaching Experience demonstrates a significant negative relationship with teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education ($\beta=-0.382$, $t=-2.572$, $p=0.017$). This suggests that as teaching experience increases, attitudes towards Inclusive Education tend to become less positive.

As such, professional development initiatives targeted at experienced teachers could focus on fostering a growth mindset and providing ongoing support to encourage the adoption of inclusive pedagogies. Conversely, Sex exhibits a significant positive relationship ($\beta=0.397$, $t=2.190$, $p=0.039$), indicating that male teachers tend to have more positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education compared to female teachers.

Expertise Level in Special Education demonstrates a significant negative relationship at the 10% significance level ($\beta=-0.354$, $t=-2.002$, $p=0.057$). Although it did not reach the conventional $p<0.05$ threshold, it suggests that teachers with higher levels of expertise in special education tend to have fewer positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education.

Professional Responsibility, Field of Specialization, and Highest Educational Attainment show non-significant relationships with teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education. While these variables did not reach statistical significance at the conventional $p<0.05$ level, their coefficients and p-values provide valuable insights into their potential influence. The negatives beta coefficients suggest that as levels of Professional Responsibility, Field of Specialization, and Highest Educational Attainment increase, attitudes towards Inclusive Education tend to become less positive.

Discussion

The results reveal that experienced teachers may possess valuable pedagogical skills, they may also become more rooted in traditional teaching practices, potentially leading to less openness towards inclusive approaches. According to Mäkinen (2013) the possibility exist that reflection will be perceived as a means of self-reproach, which would deplete teacher

efficacy. This is in line with the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura & Adams, 1977) this suggests that critical reflection is essential to transforming one's frame of reference, including established habits and assumption. The challenges faced by experienced teachers in embracing new practices could be seen as a failure to undergo transformative learning. This highlights the importance of professional development initiatives that focus on fostering a growth mindset among experienced teachers. Adequate resources help teachers cope with the emotional demands of teaching and affect work engagement (Bakker et al., 2007).

In the context of Inclusive Education, male teachers may perceive themselves as having a pivotal role in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments. This perception aligns with the Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) societal expectations of leadership and problem-solving typically associated with masculinity. Additionally, some male teachers who may not identify as straight may possess unique insights and experiences that inform their approach to Inclusive Education. For instance, they may have a heightened understanding of diversity and empathy, which are essential qualities in effectively supporting students with special needs. Thus, they understand that creating an inclusive classroom requires not only leadership and authority but also compassion, understanding, and flexibility. By embracing these qualities, male teachers contribute to the development of inclusive learning environments where all students, including those with special needs, feel valued and supported (Dewsbury & Brame, 2019).

Teachers' specialized training and experience in special education may make them more aware of the challenges and complexities involved in supporting students with diverse needs (Allam & Martin, 2021). While their expertise equips them with valuable skills and knowledge, it may also expose them to the limitations and resource constraints within inclusive settings. As a result, they may harbor reservations or uncertainty about the feasibility and effectiveness of inclusive practices in meeting the diverse needs of all students. Moreover, teachers with advanced expertise in special education may have witnessed firsthand the disparities and inequities that exist within inclusive classrooms (Kulkarni, 2022). They may have encountered situations where students with disabilities or special needs did not receive adequate support or accommodation, leading to frustration and discouragement with Inclusive Education approaches. These experiences may contribute to a more critical and cautious stance towards inclusive practices, as they may question the ability of mainstream classrooms to effectively address the individualized needs of all students.

For Professional Responsibility, educators with a heightened sense of duty towards meeting the diverse needs of their students may perceive the challenges associated with Inclusive Education more intensely, potentially leading to more cautious attitudes (Connell, 2020). Similarly, teachers with specialized training or expertise in particular fields, as indicated by Field of Specialization, may approach inclusive practices with a greater awareness of the complexities and limitations involved, which could influence their attitudes towards inclusion. Moreover, educators with higher levels of Educational Attainment may have been exposed to advanced educational theories and research findings that highlight the complexities of Inclusive Education (Bandura & Adams, 1977). Their deeper understanding of educational principles and practices may lead to a more critical evaluation of inclusive approaches, potentially contributing to less positive attitudes. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and professional development initiatives aimed at addressing potential barriers to fostering positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education among educators.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into high school teachers' and administrators' attitude towards Inclusive Education, informed by a comprehensive analysis of demographic characteristics and professional attributes. The findings underscore the diversity within the surveyed group, with varying levels of teaching experience, gender representation, and expertise in special education. While most participants hold positive attitudes toward Inclusive Education, there are notable areas of concern, particularly regarding the adequacy of training and support for addressing the needs of special education students. Despite differing perspectives on certain aspects of Inclusive Education, such as the suitability of all disabilities for regular classrooms, there is a collective recognition of the importance of informed training and legal understanding to create inclusive learning environments. The regression analysis further expounds the influential factors shaping teachers' attitudes towards Inclusive Education, highlighting the significance of teaching experience, gender, and expertise level in special education. While experienced teachers may exhibit fewer positive attitudes towards inclusive practices, male teachers tend to hold more favorable views, potentially due to perceived leadership roles and unique insights into diversity. Interestingly, teachers with higher levels of expertise in special education demonstrate fewer positive attitudes, possibly reflecting a heightened awareness of challenges and limitations within inclusive settings.

Considering these findings, it is imperative to develop targeted interventions and professional development initiatives aimed at fostering positive attitudes towards Inclusive Education among educators. By addressing training gaps, promoting legal understanding, and providing social support, educational institutions can create inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of all students, ultimately fostering a more equitable and inclusive society.

Recommendations

1. **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** The Department of Education should prioritize the development and implementation of robust training programs and professional development opportunities for teachers focused on Inclusive Education. These programs should address the identified gaps in teacher preparation and provide ongoing support to educators in effectively addressing the needs of students with diverse abilities. Training should cover areas such as differentiated instruction, behavior management strategies, assistive technology utilization, and understanding of special education laws and policies.

2. **Inclusive Curriculum Development:** The Department of Education should review and revise the curriculum to ensure that it reflects the principles of Inclusive Education and caters to the diverse learning needs of all students. This includes incorporating inclusive teaching practices, diverse perspectives, and resources that promote accessibility and accommodate various learning styles and abilities. Curriculum materials should be culturally responsive and inclusive, reflecting the diversity of students' backgrounds and experiences.

3. **Resource Allocation:** The Department of Education hand in hand with the Government should allocate sufficient resources, including funding, staffing, and materials, to support the implementation of Inclusive Education practices in schools. This includes providing access to assistive technology, specialized instructional materials, and support personnel such as special education teachers, aides, and therapists. Schools should be

equipped with facilities and infrastructure accessible to all students, including those with physical disabilities.

4. Longitudinal Studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes in educators' perceptions of academic outcomes for students with diverse needs over time. This will provide insights into how attitudes and practices evolve with experience and changing educational contexts.

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