

**Readiness for Inclusive Special Education: A Survey among In-service Teachers in
Zamboanga City, Philippines**

Marilyn M. Dioso¹
marilyn.dioso@wmsu.edu.ph

Aina B. Iglesia²
iglesia.aina@wmsu.edu.ph

Floramie M. Ramiro³
floramie.ramiro@wmsu.edu.ph

Nolan S. Iglesia⁴
nolan.iglesia@lms.wmsu.edu.ph

College of Teacher Education
Western Mindanao State University
Normal Road, Baliwasan, Zamboanga City
7000 Philippines

Abstract

This empirical investigation on the extent of readiness of In-service teachers for Inclusive Special Education was conducted with a total of 270 randomly selected respondents. The study utilized a valid and reliable research questionnaire to gather data relative to teachers' extent of readiness. Analysis of the data revealed that the respondents' extent of readiness is characterized as '*high*'. The study further disclosed that in terms of classroom instruction, assessment of students performance, and evaluating and monitoring students progress the respondents reported to be '*highly ready*'. However, in terms of curricular content, the respondents disclosed to be only '*moderately ready*'. Additionally, it was revealed that age grouping does not statistically influence respondents' extent of readiness for Inclusive Education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Readiness, Pre-service Teachers, Special Education

Introduction

Access to education is a basic right. Everybody must, therefore, be afforded the opportunity without regards for anything (i.e., gender, social status, ethnicity, language spoken, religious belief, political convictions, ability). Schools must then become inclusive, discriminating no one.

Inclusive Education (IE) is an approach considered to be anchored on the idea that 'Education is for All'. It is an educational framework that operates on the philosophy of acceptance. In this educational framework, disadvantaged learners, especially those of special needs who are identified to be the most marginalized across all groups, are allowed to learn in regular schools alongside their typically developing peers (Singh et al., 2020).

Adoption of the principles of IE among educational systems is being realized. Evidently, there is an increase in the number of advocates of IE. Remarkably, there was also an increase in the number of policies developed and bills passed into law supportive of the ideals and practices of IE. However, it cannot be denied that it is the teachers who are regarded as the most important factor

in the full realization of any educational program (Alieto, 2019; Alieto et al., 2019; Alieto & Rillo, 2018; Buslon et al., 2020; Cabangcala et al., 2021; Dela Rama et al., 2020; Mumbing et al., 2021; Ricohermoso et al., 2019) including the success of IE (Ahmmed et al., 2012; Bhatnagar & Das, 2014).

Thus, it does not come as a surprise that most of research investigations, realized to provide support to IE, were targeted towards either would-be teachers (e.g., Pil et al., 2022) and in-service teachers (e.g., Lao et al., 2022; Rosales & Rosales, 2019; Siason et al., 2022). Relative to this, with the Philippines as context in mind, the Department of Education released a DepEd Order No. 72 s. 2009 known as the ‘Strategy for Increasing Participation Rate of Children’. One of the items stipulated in the said memorandum order is the training of teachers for IE practices. This implies that teachers’ need to be equipped, and that their readiness matter in the overall effective implementation of IE. Logically, teachers who are prepared are the ones who would eventually be able to efficiently implement IE as compared to those who are yet to gain readiness in terms of knowledge and skills.

Despite the importance of teachers’ readiness in the implementation of IE, there is a dearth of studies conducted which determined and explored teachers’ readiness for IE. Most of the studies were realized to determine teachers’ attitude (e.g., Dapudong, 2014; Pil et al., 2022).

Hence, it is argued, along this line, that determining teachers’ readiness is an equally important research goal. In order to determine what training to provide to teachers with respect the implementation of IE, it is imperative to first determine teachers’ extent of readiness; hence this study. In addition, this study, although investigated a classic topic in the field of IE, remains novel in terms of the respondents investigated. The respondents of the studies were drawn from non-metropolitan areas where the idea of IE remains emerging (Pil et al., 2022). Furthermore, the study also explored influence of age groupings in the teachers’ extent of readiness for inclusive education.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of teachers’ readiness for Inclusive Education?
2. Is there a significant difference in the respondents’ extent of readiness for Inclusive Education when data are grouped according to age groups?

Methodology

Research Design

The research utilized the descriptive-quantitative research design. Data was interpreted numerically with a range of statistical analysis. Its emphasis focused on the measurement and proof. Therefore, this study accepted the scientific approach. This is according to the principle that through observational counts something can be made meaningful.

Moreover, the study is noted to be non-experimental as no use of treatment was involved in the study (Thompson, 2007 in Perez & Alieto, 2018; Torres & Alieto, 2019a, 2019b).

Participants of the Study

This study was delimited to the teachers' skills and readiness for inclusive special education. The respondents were from the identified public schools with SPED Centers. Random Sampling using Slovin's formula was used in the study. A lottery technique was utilized to get the respondents from the different schools. Name of schools was coded to ensure confidentiality. Table 1 provides the sampling distribution across identified schools.

Table 1
Number of respondents per school

Elementary Schools with SPED Center	Population (Number of Regular Teachers)	%	Sample Population (Total Number of Respondents)
School A	134	16.07	43
School B	64	7.67	21
School C	109	13.07	35
School D	65	7.79	21
School E	107	12.83	35
School F	100	11.99	32
School G	90	10.79	29
School H	97	11.63	31
School I	68	8.16	23
Total	834	100	270

Research Instrument

To determine the teachers' extent of readiness for IE, the study utilized the instrument of Taripe (2018). It consisted of forty (40) items. There were ten (10) items included in each indicator with the scale of Very High to Very Low. Permission was sought in the use of the instrument from the author. The use of survey questionnaire was inspired by the claim of Dillman et al. (2009 cited in Alieto, 2018) that such is an efficient means of data collection approach when aiming to gather from a large sample size.

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers secured ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Oversight Committee (REOC) of the University to which the researchers are faculty of. A letter requesting access with the respondents was sent to the Schools Division Superintended, Division Office Zamboanga City. Upon the approval of the request, a consent letter was provided to every respondent of the study. An orientation was done before data gathering. On the average, the respondents answered the questionnaire within 40 minutes. All gathered data were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To determine the extent of the respondents' readiness for IE, the data set was treated with descriptive statistics [e.g., Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD)]. For the determination of whether the respondents' extent of readiness for inclusive statistically differ across age groupings, the data set was treated with an inferential statistic of difference known as One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results and Discussions

Respondents extent of readiness for IE in terms of classroom instruction

Table 2
Teachers' Extent of Readiness in terms of Classroom Instruction

	Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1	Prepares differentiated instructions for regular students and those with special needs.	3.65	High
2	Uses effective ways of persuading students to follow classroom rules.	3.92	High
3	Offer hands-on instruction to apply learned knowledge.	3.91	High
4	Uses effective behavior management techniques to modify students' inappropriate behavior.	3.84	High
5	Motivates students to arouse their interest in learning concepts.	4.08	High
6	Provide remedial reading strategies to students with reading difficulties.	3.90	High
7	Provides learning activities that enhance collaborative learning.	4.01	High
8	Use manipulatives to concretize concepts.	3.78	High
9	Gives exercises to attain mastery of concepts.	4.03	High
10	Employs appropriate strategies which promote interest.	3.89	High
Grand Mean		3.90	High

Table 2 shows the overall teachers' extent of readiness for inclusive special education in terms of classroom instruction. With the given ten (10) statements, 7 yielded the weighted mean within 3.65-3.92 with the description of High. For statements 5, 7, and 9 the weighted mean is within 4.01-4.08 with the same description of high. Further, statement number 5 "*Motivates students to arouse their interest in learning concepts.*" has the highest mean score with the weighted mean of 4.08 which is High.

This implies that the respondents are highly prepared and able to motivate learners, with and without special needs to engage in learning in an inclusive special education setting if given the chance to handle a class in this type of setting.

Moreover, this finding contrasts with the study conducted by Muega (2016) which disclosed the participants' overall response in the aspect of readiness in handling students with special needs in an inclusive education. The findings clearly stated that teachers' readiness for inclusive special education lies within the verbal description of 'High'.

Respondents' extent of readiness in terms of curriculum content

Table 2.1
Teachers' extent of readiness for IE in terms of curriculum content

	Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1	Implements various curricula for students with special needs.	3.40	Moderately High
2	Designs lessons appropriate about the special education program.	3.27	Moderately High
3	Orients students about the special education program.	3.38	Moderately High
4	Aware about the learning tasks for students with learning disabilities.	3.35	Moderately High
5	Organizes classroom activities for both regular students and students with special needs.	3.42	Moderately High
6	Knowledgeable about the lessons appropriate for students with special needs but finds difficulty in explaining the concepts.	3.25	Moderately High
7	Knowledgeable in preparing instructional materials appropriate for students with special needs.	3.19	Moderately High
8	Assists students on their academic difficulties.	3.74	High
9	Encourage students with special educational needs to participate and perform well in class.	3.70	High
10	Knowledgeable in handling students with learning difficulties.	3.27	Moderately High
	Grand Mean	3.40	Moderately High

Table 2.1 presents teachers' extent of readiness for inclusive special education in terms of curriculum content. As shown, two out of ten statements were rated within the scale of 3.70 - 3.74 described as high and eight statements were within 3.41 – 3.42 described as moderately high. The table further shows that the statement “*Assists students on their academic difficulties.*” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.74 described as high level. It implies that the teachers are highly prepared in assisting students in their academic difficulties particularly in understanding curriculum content. This was followed by the statement “*Encourage students with special educational needs to participate and perform well in class*” with a weighted mean of 3.70 described as high level. This means that the teachers are highly prepared in encouraging students with special educational needs to participate and perform better inside an inclusive special education classroom. On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was reflected in the statement, “*Knowledgeable in preparing instructional materials appropriate for students with special needs.*” as evident in the weighted mean 3.19 which described as moderately high. This means that the teachers have moderately high readiness level in preparing instructional materials appropriate for students with special needs. The overall mean for the teachers' extent of readiness for inclusive special education in curriculum content is 3.40 described as moderately high. This implies that the teachers' extent of readiness for inclusive special education in the curriculum content is adequately high only if given a chance to handle a class in an inclusive special education setting. This finding is supported by Rabara (2017) in his study that emphasizes the central point and the most

significant factor to consider about inclusive special education is to design developmentally appropriate and accessible educational program to facilitate successes and achievements of students with special needs in an inclusive classroom.

Respondents' extent of readiness in terms of assessment of students' performance

Table 2.2
Teachers' extent of readiness for IE in terms of assessment of students performance

	Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1	Constructs questions that eliminate critical thinking.	3.47	Moderately High
2	Uses variety and relevant assessment strategies measure achievement.	3.73	High
3	Individualized assessment.	3.62	High
4	Possesses knowledge in assessing and grading content knowledge of the students.	3.73	High
5	Uses alternative testing techniques in assessing students' performance and progress.	3.72	High
6	Uses appropriate assessment tools to measure students' progress.	3.79	High
7	Conducts formative and summative tests.	4.15	High
8	Finds difficulties in designing homework.	3.08	Moderately High
9	Utilizes oral examination to measure students' learning.	3.68	High
10	Finds difficulty in preparing assessment tools appropriate for children with special needs.	3.24	Moderately High
	Grand Mean	3.62	High

Table 2.2 shows presents teachers' extent of readiness for inclusive special education in terms of assessment on student's performance. As shown, three out of ten statements were rated within the scale of 3.08 – 3.47 described as moderately high and seven statements were rated within the scale of 3.62– 4.15 described as high. The table further shows that the highest weighted mean obtained by the statement, “*Conducts formative and summative tests.*” is 4.15 described as high. This means that the teachers' extent of readiness in assessing special and regular students in an inclusive special education is high particularly in conducting formative and summative tests. However, it is also noted that three statements out of ten obtained the lowest weighted mean and these are, “*Utilizes oral examination to measure students' learning.*,” “*Finds difficulty in preparing assessment tools appropriate for children with special needs.*,” “and” “*Finds difficulties in designing homework.*” with a weighted mean within the scale of 3.08 – 3.47 described as moderately high. This implies that teachers' readiness in assessing student's performance specifically in utilizing oral examinations, preparing assessment tools appropriate for children with special needs and in designing homework have become quite challenging in their part because this is rated as moderately high. This further implies that teachers need more support in these areas to achieve higher level of readiness and competence in handling students with diverse needs in an inclusive special education. These findings then corroborates n the

study of Shareefa (2016), that what teachers consider, understand, and experience regarding the readiness of schools for inclusive education in terms of leadership, climate, curriculum, instructions, and support for students, and skills and readiness of teachers showed that teachers had an optimistic view concerning the readiness factors for inclusive education. But, the findings indicated significant challenges that may hinder the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. Further, Ainscow (2005) reiterates that these trainings are helpful since regular teachers are open to the concept of inclusive education and willing to accept the challenges and responsibilities in teaching learners with and without special needs.

Respondents' extent of readiness in terms of evaluating and monitoring students' progress

Table 2.3
Teachers' extent of readiness for IE in terms of evaluating and monitoring students' progress

	Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1	Applies varies evaluation tools in assessing students' achievement.	3.69	High
2	Uses rubrics in evaluating students' progress.	3.92	High
3	Carries out evaluation of students' performance.	3.83	High
4	Implements new guidelines.	3.59	High
5	Provides feedback to students with special needs as well as to parents.	3.69	High
6	Conducts periodic evaluation of students' progress.	4.01	High
7	Records students' progress.	4.23	High
8	Informs parents/guardians regarding students' performance/progress.	4.20	High
9	Collaborates with special education teachers, parents, and other professionals in the formulation of students' IEP.	3.45	Moderately High
10	Formulates IEP based on psychoeducational assessment.	3.14	Moderately High
	Grand Mean	3.78	High

Table 2.3 gives the extent of readiness of teachers for inclusive special education in terms of evaluating and monitoring students' progress. As shown, eight out of ten statements were rated within the scale 3.59 – 4.23 described as high and two statements were rated within the scale 3.14 – 3.45 described as moderately high. It is further shown that the highest weighted mean of 4.23 described high is obtained by the statement, “*Records students' progress*” This means that the teachers achieve the highest level of readiness to consistently record the progress of students in their classes. It is also noted that the statement, “*Informs parents/guardians regarding students' performance/progress.*” Obtained the second highest weighted mean of 4.20 described as high. This means that the teachers possess high level of readiness to facilitate information to the parents/guardians about the progress and performance of their children in an inclusive special education.

On the other hand, the lowest weighted mean was reflected in the statement, “*Formulates IEP based on psychoeducational assessment.*,” as evident in the weighted mean 3.14 described as moderately high. This implies that teachers find it quite difficult to design Individual Educational Plan based on psychoeducational assessment. This indirectly gives a clue that teachers need more training and help in this area. This finding validates the study of Shareefa (2016) that the success of inclusive education comes not only from well-trained teachers on strategies but the support of the entire school community. The success of its implementation underwent several challenges. These challenges include limited resources and teachers are not ready or equipped with all the necessary skills in teaching bringing in productive inclusive practices.

The overall mean of 3.78 described as high, implies that teachers’ extent of readiness for inclusive special education in terms of monitoring and evaluating students’ progress is noted to have reached its highest level. This finding bears witness of teachers who are becoming highly prepared and equipped to handle an inclusive special education in terms of monitoring and evaluating students’ progress.

Overall Extent of Readiness for IE of the respondents

Table 2.4
Teachers’ Readiness for Inclusive Education

Dimensions	Mean	Interpretation
Classroom Instruction	3.90	High
Curriculum Content	3.40	Moderately High
Assessment on Students’ Performance	3.62	High
Evaluating and Monitoring Students’ Progress	3.78	High
Grand Mean	3.68	High

Table 2.4 shows the summary of the extent of teachers’ readiness for inclusive special education with its four (4) indicators: Classroom Instruction; Curriculum Content; Assessment on Students’ Performance; and Evaluating and Monitoring Students’ Progress with the grand mean of 3.68 with the description of High. The indicator with the highest interpretation is the Classroom Instruction with the mean score of 3.90. This implies that teachers have enough readiness to handle students in an inclusive special education. Based on the stated Policies and Guidelines of Special Education in the Philippines by outing into action the DepEd 72, s. 2009 known as the Comprehensive Inclusive Education Program which includes the Classroom Instruction as one of its programs to achieve the full potential of learners with special educational needs. This finding is supported by Mthembu (2009) that the fundamental concept behind special education is the belief that teacher in the general education classroom has some awareness and perception about the needs of various learners, techniques, and strategies of teaching. The essential skills, understanding, and competence of teachers have a great extent in the successful implementation of special education program. Further Dapudong (2014), stressed the profound need of regular teachers to undergo special educational needs training, such as specialized practices for implementing teaching strategies employing the appropriate curriculum modifications and accommodations or adaptations for students with special needs.

Respondents' extent of readiness across age groups

Table 3
Teachers' extent of readiness for IE across age groups

Age	N	Mean			
		Classroom Instruction	Curriculum Content	Assessment on Students' Performance	Evaluating and Monitoring Students' Progress
21-30 years old	63	4.02	3.47	3.74	3.85
31-40 years old	106	3.89	3.69	3.60	3.75
41-50 years old	61	3.80	3.37	3.53	3.73
51 and above	41	3.87	3.42	3.55	3.74
Teachers' Readiness	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Classroom Instruction	1.555	0.518	1.32	0.268	
Curriculum Content	5.029	1.676	0.28	0.838	
Assessment on Students' Performance	1.512	0.504	1.35	0.259	
Evaluating and Monitoring Students' Progress	0.578	0.193	0.46	0.709	

The Table presents the significant difference in the readiness of teachers for inclusive special education in terms of Classroom Instruction, Curriculum Content, Assessment on Students' Performance and Evaluating and Monitoring Students' Progress when the variable is categorized according to age. Data show that in terms of Classroom Instruction, the F-value is 1.32 with the p -value of 0.268, Curriculum Content, the F-value is 0.28 with the p -value of 0.838, Assessment on Students' Performance, the F-value is 1.35 with the p -value of 0.259, and Evaluating and Monitoring Students' Progress, the F-value is 0.46 with the p -value of 0.709 which are all greater than α 0.05.

Therefore, there is no significant difference in the readiness of teachers for inclusive special education in terms of the four (4) categories when the variable is categorized according to age. This implies that teachers for inclusive education of different ages have the same readiness in terms of the four (4) categories.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the level of teachers' readiness consisted of four components: the classroom instruction, curriculum content, assessment on students' performance, and

monitoring and evaluating students' progress. In terms of classroom instruction, responses revealed as moderately high extent with the grand mean of 3.90. The overall mean for curriculum content is 3.40 described as moderately high. The extent of teachers' readiness on assessments on students' performance and of monitoring and evaluating students' progress was high with a grand mean of 3.62 and 3.78 respectively.

The variable across age has no significant difference in the mean score of the readiness of teachers for inclusive special education. It was further concluded that teachers' readiness for inclusive special education was established with the provided In-service training for professional development.

However, further trainings in handling students with special needs in an inclusive setting should be given emphasis. Additional special education support, opportunities, and resources are needed to increase the level of teachers' readiness for inclusive special education. The Department of Education may continue to take action in the full implementation of inclusive special education in all schools with SPED Center implement full action in the call for inclusive special education.

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