

## READINESS OF PUBLIC-SCHOOL TEACHERS IN HANDLING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*State-funded teachers in the education department are recognized to be necessary in the implementation of inclusive education. They assume a fundamental job in the effective utilization of inclusive education as they are seen as critical during the time spent incorporating students with special needs into regular classes. Consequently, this study is intended to determine the preparedness of state-funded teachers in handling inclusive education. Specifically, this study was to determine the level of awareness and attitudes of public-school teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education. In particular, it sought to identify the demographic profile of the public-school teachers, their level of readiness in handling inclusive education in terms of awareness, attitude, and skills and the significant difference in the level of readiness of teachers towards inclusive education when grouped according to profile. The output of this study is the training program to enhance the awareness, attitudes, and skills of teachers towards inclusion. The study used a descriptive – quantitative method of research using both the quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collections. Frequency distribution, percentage, standard deviation, MANOVA, and descriptive statistics were used as statistical tools of this study. The critical discoveries of the investigation unveiled that state-funded teachers' status in dealing with inclusive education is progressively mindful on the significance of inclusive education. In any case, they need training, classes, and workshops because few mainstream teachers are new to mainstreaming. They are agreeable on inclusive education. However, they need refreshed hands-on training. Moreover, they are skilled in their own personal capacity, but they lack further trainings specifically on the crafting of Individualized Education Plans. Therefore, there is a need to have a separate subject on disability and inclusive education in the teacher training courses.*

*Keywords: Inclusive Education, Awareness, Attitudes, Skills, Descriptive, Quantitative, Philippines, Asia*

### INTRODUCTION

Public school teachers assume an imperative job in the aptness of inclusive education as they viewed as relevant in the exercise of mainstreaming. The study aims to determine the preparedness of state-funded teachers towards inclusive education in terms of

their awareness, attitudes, and skills. The education department of the Philippines has the goal of increasing the number of children regardless of needs with the help of the school staff, classmates, parents, and the community. Moreover, the “Magna Carta for Disabled Persons”, ensures that disadvantaged persons are offered with equal access to quality education

and sufficient avenue to develop their skills. Section 16 states that disabled persons are provided with vocational or technical and other training programs in preparation for their future. In line with the Department of Education's thrust in providing quality and inclusive basic education for all, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to provide the necessary educational interventions for learners with certain exceptionalities through its Special Education (SPED) program. The SPED program of DepEd gives an all-encompassing methodology in taking into account the requirements of students with different exceptionalities. This program guarantees that pupils with exceptionalities will receive quality training by giving them their individual and one of a kind adapting needs. This activity takes into account pupils with visual debilitation, hearing weakness, scholarly incapacity, learning handicap, a mental imbalance range issue, correspondence issue, physical inability, enthusiastic and behavioral confusion, numerous inability with a visual disability, and to the individuals who are orthopedically challenged. It is, therefore, the primary focus of this research is to determine the needed strategies, skills, and among other needed aspects of mainstream teachers in handling inclusive education. Indeed, Dapudong (2013) stressed that teachers' awareness, attitudes, and skills had been found to affect the process and the outcome of inclusion to a great extent. The author pointed out that teachers' awareness and attitudes are of great value to the system because these professionals can address any gaps between formally designed education programs and the actual delivery of these programs, in terms of curriculum modification and adaptations that are appropriate for students with special needs. Some of the problems are a limited understanding of the concept of Inclusive Education, negative attitude towards learners with disabilities, and resistance to change are some of the major barriers impeding inclusive education. In the Philippines, both in the urban communities and remote or provincial territories, numerous government-funded schools stay poorly prepared. This could be one reason why many public school teachers in the Philippines

question their ability to instruct in a comprehensive school. In research by Muega and Echavia (2011), they found out that many schools do not have enough teachers to handle inclusive education. In the 87 in-service teachers who said they are willing to handle and work with professionals for the inclusion of Children with Special Needs in general education classrooms, but their overall response indicates they are not prepared to take on the challenge of handling students with disorders or disabilities. This issue is additionally exasperated by the trouble of meeting other crucial prerequisites of sound IE. Thus, the awareness, attitude, and skills of public school teachers contribute to the success of the Department of Education program on Inclusive Education. The present study aimed at studying the readiness of teachers about inclusive education, which is a critical factor that may either thwart or ease the entire process of inclusive education.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to determine the level of awareness and attitudes of public-school teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education. In particular, it sought to: 1.) identify the demographic profile of the public-school teachers; 2.) evaluate the level of readiness in handling inclusive education in terms of awareness, attitude, and skills; 3. analyze the significant difference in the level of readiness of teachers towards inclusive education when grouped according to profile; 4.) proposed a training program to enhance the awareness, attitudes and skills of teachers towards inclusive education.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive-quantitative method of research. The survey questionnaire and focus group discussion were utilized to determine the readiness of the public-school teachers in handling inclusive education. The study was undertaken in ten Elementary Public Schools recognized as the schools implementing institutionalized SPED classes.



Purposive sampling was used considering all full-time mainstreamed teachers in the ten implementing institutionalized SPED schools. There were seventy teachers from the ten implementing institutionalized SPED schools of Cagayan de Oro Division. The instrument of Dalonos (2013) was modified with her consent to be used in this study in determining the teachers' awareness, knowledge, and skill levels in handling inclusive education. The survey questionnaire has four parts: (1) the respondents' demographic profile, (2) the awareness level, (3) the knowledge level, and (4) the skill level of teachers in handling inclusive education. Frequency distribution, percentage, standard deviation, MANOVA, and descriptive statistics were used as statistical tools used in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Public School Teachers' Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the public school teachers includes age, gender, educational attainment, the field of specialization, teaching position assignment, years of experience in teaching mainstream pupils, and the ratio of mainstream students to the teacher.

#### 1.1 Gender

Table 1. Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	8	11%
Female	62	89%

This result revealed that there were more female than male teachers who participated in the study. Further, this implies that there are more female teachers employed in the Department of Education (DepEd) than males.

#### 1.2 Age

This disclosed that there were more mainstream teachers who belonged to the age of 31 to 35 years old. It means that mainstream teachers have been in the Department of

Table 2. Respondents' Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percent (%)
26 – 30	12	17%
31 – 35	16	23%
36 – 40	13	19%
41 - 45	8	11%
46 – 50	14	20%
51 – 55	3	4%
56 – 60	4	6%
Total	70	100%

Education for more than ten years before they were assigned to mainstreaming. In this regard, teachers' experience in the regular classroom in ten years or more could be a good criterion for becoming mainstream teachers.

### 1.3 Education

Table 3. Respondents' Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent (%)
BEED	63	90%
PROF. ED.	2	3%
MA	4	6%
PhD	1	1%

It was revealed that majority of the respondents were graduates of general education; nevertheless, only one respondent finished the doctoral degree. This implies that these teachers are not motivated to pursue graduate studies since most of them are BEED degree holder only.

### 1.4 Specialization

Table 4. Respondents' Field of Specialization

Field of Specialization	Frequency	Percent (%)
General	20	29%
Filipino	10	14%
Science	12	17%
Special Education	9	13%
English	8	11%
Home Economics	2	3%
Early Childhood	4	6%
Mathematics	1	1%
Social Studies	4	6%



This reveals that many of the mainstream teachers were not major in Special Education. This implies that many of the respondents were general education major, and they did not undergo training for mainstreaming.

**1.5 Position**

Table 5. Respondents' Teaching Position

Teaching Position	Frequency	Percent (%)
Teacher I	46	66%
Teacher II	1	1%
Teacher III	19	27%
Master Teacher I	3	4%
Master Teacher II	1	1%

This implies that the majority of the mainstream teachers are holding a Teacher 1 position. The Teacher 1 position is the first status given to all teachers who teach in the education agency of the government.

**1.6 Number of Years in Mainstream Class**

Table 6. Respondents' Years in the Mainstream Class

Years in the Mainstream Class	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-5	62	88%
6-10	4	6%
11-15	2	3%
16-20	2	3%

This implies that many of the mainstream teachers are still in their first year to five years in mainstreaming. Additionally, many of the respondents were neophytes in the mainstreaming curriculum. Moreover, there were only 6% of teachers who had been teaching mainstream from 11 years because some of these teachers migrated and worked abroad.

**1.7 Ratio of Teacher to Mainstream Students**

Table 7. The ratio of Teacher to Mainstream Students

Ratio	Frequency	Percent (%)
1:1	45	64 %
1:2	9	13 %
1:3	7	10 %
1:4	6	9 %
1:5	3	4 %

Majority of the respondents has one on one correspondence to their mainstream pupils. Specifically, 64% of the respondents were handling one mainstream student per mainstream teacher. This implies that each pupil's special needs are addressed since the teacher individually addressed them.

**2. Level of Readiness in Handling Inclusive Education**

**2.1 Awareness Level**

The level of awareness of the regular public-school teachers on their readiness in handling inclusive education. The data unveiled that the respondents of the study were very much aware of the need for training in special education as a receiving teacher of these mainstream pupils. They were very much aware of the need for proper information and background of special education, and very much aware that special education training would help them. This signifies that many of the respondents were very much aware on the need of trainings to appreciate, understand and perform better as mainstream teachers. Furthermore, they value the information on inclusive education especially in addressing the issues and concerns of their mainstream students. Focus group discussion revealed that many of the respondents were new to mainstreaming. They disclosed that they needed trainings to handle inclusive education. Hallahan (2012) stated that the truly effective special education requires both a general education teacher and a special education teacher trained to do two different things, not merely to work together with a common purpose. This means that in order to provide "truly effective special education," the general education teacher



and the special education teacher must be properly educated in their respective fields and education about how to work together to provide an effective learning environment for pupils with special needs in the inclusion classroom. The findings exposed that the regular classroom teachers were willing to take the responsibility on mainstream pupils but were not confident whether they had the skills to carry out that task. Most mainstream teachers felt the need for enhancement in training in mainstreaming. These findings suggested the need for in-service training for regular classroom teachers through teacher trainers (UNESCO, 1996). Enhancement training in the field of mainstreaming can improve understanding and attitude of mainstream teachers regarding inclusive education (Kuester, 2000; Powers, 2002). The inclusive setting can expand a student's personal interests and knowledge of the world, which is excellent preparation for adulthood.

## 2.2 Attitude Level

Attitude refers to how one thinks (the cognitive component), feels (affective component) and intends to behave (the behavioral component) towards the mainstream pupils. The respondents were highly favorable on establishing linkages with different agencies, coordination of SPED and mainstream teachers to the parents of the mainstream pupils. Inclusive educational setting is important for social and academic achievement, consistent and open relationship, understanding disabilities among regular pupils in the collaborative planning process, developing a positive attitude towards children with disabilities and the proper information on the usage of assistive technology devices. This implies that the respondents were highly favorable on the idea that mainstream teachers need more information, training with regards to proper handling of mainstream pupils, proper teaching strategies and adequate dealing of the behavioral concerns of these pupils. On the other hand, the respondents were prepared and determined to work with children with disabilities. This implies that mainstream

teachers are willing to take an extra mile despite lack of training; they continue to persevere in teaching both the regular and mainstream pupils.

## 2.3 Skill Level

Table 8. Mean Values of Respondents' Skill Level in Handling Inclusive Education

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I use discussion as a teaching strategy for the subject that I teach.	3.15	0.67	Skilled
2. I support the need for teachers to know one basic sign language.	2.6	1.1	Skilled
3. I develop my personal skills such as empathy, patience, and love in teaching mainstreamed pupils.	3.3	0.64	Highly Skilled
4. I am flexible in dealing with students' needs (due dates, absences, make-up exams)	3.24	0.71	Skilled
5. I develop the Individualized Education Program (IEPs) for each mainstream student.	2.35	1.02	Moderately Skilled
6. I adapt lessons to meet the needs of students.	3.1	0.74	Skilled
7. I implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) throughout the school year to reflect students' progress and goals.	2.50	0.95	Moderately Skilled
8. I teach and mentor students as a class in small groups and one-on-one.	3.05	0.81	Skilled
9. I assess students' skills to determine their needs and to develop teaching plans.	2.98	0.8	Skilled
10. I prepare and help students transition from grade to grade and after graduation.	2.50	0.88	Moderately Skilled
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>0.83</b>	<b>Skilled</b>

Table 8 shows the results of the skill level of public-school teachers in handling inclusive education. Skill in handling inclusive education is important to every mainstream teacher because they needed to master the mainstream regular classroom course content. The respondents were highly skilled regarding their personal attitudes



such as empathy, patience, and love in teaching mainstream pupils. This implies that mainstream teachers were very much passionate in their service to inclusive education. However, they were moderately skilled in developing Individualized Education Programs. This means that mainstream teachers need more training on how to craft and implement the Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The mainstream teachers were highly skilled in giving empathy, patience, and love to their mainstream pupils. According to Macbeath et al. (2013), there was evidence that a range of special needs had helped teachers to be more perceptive, more flexible, accommodating, and ultimately more learner-centered. It does make a better teacher because it raises the patience threshold. It forces the teacher to try new strategies, new techniques, and to be the best teacher can be to keep that child.

### 3. Significant Difference in the Level of Readiness

The study used one-way multivariate analysis of variance (ONE-WAY MANOVA) as there are three sub-scales of preparedness to inclusive education as dependent variables.

#### 3.1 Sub-scales of Readiness

Table 9. MANOVA on the Different Sub-scales of Readiness (Dependent Variable) of Each Independent Variable

Pillai's Trace	Value	F	Sig.	Partial eta
Age	0.42	1.70	0.04	0.14
Gender	0.03	0.66	0.58	0.03
Education	0.09	0.70	0.71	0.03
Specialization	0.56	1.37	0.11	0.19
Position	0.23	1.33	0.20	0.08
Experience	0.27	0.88	0.62	0.09
TS Ratio	0.17	0.77	0.71	0.06

Table 9 illustrates that in the MANOVA test, the independent variable that has a statistically significant effect on the different sub-scales of the dependent variable (awareness, attitudes, and skills) is age. This is evident by ( $F = 1.701, p = .042 < .05$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected. This means that the different levels of the age of the respondents have a significant effect on the dependent variables combined. The partial eta reveals that 13.9 percent of the variation of the dependent variables combined is accounted for the differences in age of the respondents. The rest of the independent variables have no significant effect; therefore, it does not need a series of posthoc tests. The post-hoc test suggested the effect of age on awareness, knowledge, and skills as a significant effect on the readiness of the teachers. The study still presents the posthoc tests for other independent variables, although, there is no need for that. It is only presented for verification of the previous manova tests in Table 9. It is easily seen that age does make a difference only for awareness and attitudes, but not on the skills of the respondents. This evident by ( $F = 2.724, p = .0206 < .05$ ) and ( $F = 2.446, p = .034 < .05$ ) respectively.

#### 3.2 Significant Different Grouped According to Profile

Table 10, findings imply that there is a need for other relevant predictor variables to be incorporated in future studies. The age variable is significant as a predictor. The gender, education, the field of specialization, position, experience, and the teacher-student ratio do not show significant. These predictor variables may include: teachers training in inclusive education that reinforces their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in adopting inclusive education; educational and teacher support; provisions of facilities, learning materials, and pre-inclusion training as cited by Hay, et al. (2001). The results also imply the need for in-service training to empower them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies required to teach in an inclusive class (Engelbrecht, Forlin and Swart,



2000) saying that mainstream teachers were trained accordingly.

Table 10. Significant Difference in Readiness Level when grouped according to Profile

Profile	Preparedness	Mean	Df	F	P	Partial eta square	Decision
Age	Awareness	3.041	6	2.724	0.02	0.206	Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	6	2.446	0.034	0.189	Significant
	Skills	2.917	6	1.558	0.174	0.129	Not Significant
Gender	Awareness	3.041	1	0.875	0.353	0.013	Not Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	1	0.351	0.556	0.005	Not Significant
	Skills	2.917	1	0.169	0.682	0.002	Not Significant
Education	Awareness	3.041	3	0.885	0.453	0.039	Not Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	3	0.481	0.696	0.021	Not Significant
	Skills	2.917	3	1.059	0.372	0.046	Not Significant
Specialization	Awareness	3.041	10	1.406	0.2	0.192	Not Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	10	0.45	0.915	0.071	Not Significant
	Skills	2.917	10	1.11	0.37	0.158	Not Significant
Position	Awareness	3.041	4	0.119	0.975	0.007	Not Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	4	2.248	0.073	0.122	Not Significant
	Skills	2.917	4	0.453	0.77	0.027	Not Significant
Experience	Awareness	3.041	7	1.418	0.214	0.138	Not Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	7	0.358	0.923	0.031	Not Significant
	Skills	2.917	7	0.825	0.57	0.085	Not Significant
TS Ratio	Awareness	3.041	5	1.335	0.261	0.094	Not Significant
	Attitudes	3.273	5	0.13	0.985	0.01	Not Significant
	Skills	2.917	5	0.729	0.604	0.054	Not Significant

**4. Training program to enhance the awareness, attitudes and skills of teachers towards inclusive education.**

A training matrix on enhancement in handling inclusive education that aims to make teachers aware of the needs and interests of all kinds of learners in the context of inclusive education. The need for training for teachers should include learners with various needs and interests in structuring lessons. It is important also to educate school heads, special educators, mainstream teachers, and regular teachers on the importance of collaboration among them. Furthermore, it is significant to educate teachers in identifying and applying appropriate and relevant teaching/learning strategies and assessment in inclusive education.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The public-school teachers in the Department Education have not fully embraced the inclusive education.

1. Teachers were more aware of the need for updated special education training that would equip them in handling pupils' behavior and would provide them teaching strategies in imparting lessons to the mainstream pupils.
2. Teachers were favorable to inclusive education. However, they need to be exposed to training, seminars, and workshops. They were favorable in collaborating with administrators, special education teachers, and mainstream teachers. Teachers were having difficulty in collaborating with the special education teachers since the latter did not monitor or evaluate the progress of the mainstream pupils. However, the teachers are prepared and willing to work with children with disabilities.
3. Teachers were skilled on a personal level. However, Teachers needed teaching strategies in handling the mainstream pupils.
4. The age of the teacher is the predictor to the success of inclusive education. It could be because of the experience they had with the pupils with special needs.
5. Finally, the mainstream teachers had difficulties in embracing the program fully.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. They may make programs and allocate budget exclusively for inclusive education to properly address the concerns of the mainstream teachers in inclusive education.
2. They may have a streamline of training, seminars, and workshops on inclusive education to all of their teachers, whether it is mainstream teachers or not.
3. A time series evaluation of inclusive education training effects should be done to ascertain the degree of durability of the changes experienced.
4. They should help the mainstream teachers by sharing to them proper modules, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and varied teaching strategies in handling these mainstream pupils.
5. They need to visit or monitor monthly the progress of these pupils with the mainstream teachers. With this, they can help the mainstream teachers become competent in handling inclusive education.

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