



TEACHERS' PREPAREDNESS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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HIGHLIGHTS



Benguet State University-College of Teacher Education (BHSU-CTE) teachers are moderately familiar with the principles of inclusive education. Specifically, teachers in the elementary and secondary levels need to increase further their levels of familiarity with inclusive education.



CTE teachers are moderately efficacious in the management of inclusive education. There is a need to improve their capacity to enhance the learning activities of students with diverse backgrounds and abilities and to establish partnerships to advance inclusive education.



Teachers in the elementary and secondary levels and those who have been in the service for 5 to 15 years need to enhance further their efficacy in managing inclusive education.



INTRODUCTION

Access to education is a right, not a privilege, but this concept is hardly recognized across the world.

Since the UN's Declaration of the Universal Human Rights in 1948, significant accords and policies have been postulated by the UN and interest groups to address exclusion. The 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education prohibits any exclusion from or limitation to educational opportunities on the bases of socially ascribed or perceived differences such as sex, ethnic origin, language, religion, nationality, social origin, economic condition, ability, etc.

This was amplified in the Salamanca Conference challenging "schools to accommodate all children regardless of their peculiarities and backgrounds. The World Education Forum (2000) adopted the Education for All (EFA) program to cater to all learning groups.

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandated that starting SY 2018-2019, all teacher training institutions in the Philippines should offer a course in Special and Inclusive Education that must be aligned with the K-12 Program. This is to better prepare pre-service teachers to address exclusion. Inclusive education is an educational program that accommodates diverse individuals to address their learning needs. This course orients pre-service teachers with philosophies, theories, and legal bases and strategies on implementing special and inclusive education. This study was conducted to determine the preparedness of teachers of BSU-CTE to teach this course.



METHODOLOGY

This descriptive research gathered quantitative data from 68% of BSU-CTE teachers from preschool to tertiary levels through a survey. A questionnaire was crafted using several sources: the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2015), the Self-efficacy in Implementing Inclusive Scale (Sharma et al., 2012), and the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education by Forlin. et al. (2011). Cronbach's alpha for reliability yielded coefficients from 0.90 to 0.94. Data were subjected to frequency counts, computation of percentages, mean scores, t-test and f-test. Interpretation and analyses were set at 0.05 level of confidence. To determine the preparedness of the BSU-CTE teachers on teaching inclusion, they were inquired on three domains: familiarity with the principles of inclusion, perceived efficacy in managing inclusion, and attitude toward inclusion. Statistical analyses of these domains based on level taught, years of teaching experience and attendance in training\seminars on inclusion were carried out.



FINDINGS

Familiarity with inclusion principles

Two factors were found: principles related to decision-making with the students and principles related to the active involvement of stakeholders. Decision-making with learners involves discussing matters on the nature of the inclusive learning process; on planning what to be learned, and on learning activities and how these will be assessed and evaluated. By doing so, learning difficulties can be addressed, thereby ensuring satisfactory achievement.

The second factor, active involvement of stakeholders, includes facilitating learning so that all stakeholders are actively involved. Specifically, the teachers are familiar about involving the learners in all school activities, recognizing and celebrating their achievements, making them feel valued with what they can contribute to school life, and making them feel secure in school.

The support that learners receive will redound to the development of their self-esteem and confidence. Overall findings show that teachers have moderate level of inclusion principles. Often, teachers remind pre-service teachers that “you cannot give what you do not have” and this applies to them as well.



Efficacy in managing inclusion

Teachers considered themselves moderately efficacious in managing inclusion. Three constructs were determined and they were significantly more capable in classroom management than in enhancing learning and establishing partnership. Skill in classroom management is essential for productive learning. Moreover, especially in a diverse learning environment, teachers are expected to be adept in forging partnerships with various stakeholders such as establishing linkages with relevant units outside the school that can complement and support the management of diverse learners.

Table 1: Level of familiarity, Level of Self- Efficacy and Level of Attitudes on Inclusion Education

Principles	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	t-value
Level of Familiarity of Teachers on the Principles of Inclusive Education			
Decision-making with students	2.91	Moderately familiar	4.252***
Active involvement of stakeholders	3.28	Very much familiar	
Overall mean	3.10	Moderately familiar	
Level of Self-Efficacy on Inclusive Education			
Self- Efficacy			f-value
Enhancing Learning	3.05b	Moderately efficacious	17.149***
Classroom Management	3.30a	Very much efficacious	
Establishing Partnership	2.95b	Moderately efficacious	
Overall Mean	3.07	Moderately efficacious	
Level of Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education			
Attitudes			t-value
Toward self-improvement	3.60	Strongly agree	4.304**
Toward mainstreaming	3.12	Agree	
Overall mean	3.36	Strongly agree	

Attitude towards inclusion

Two factors on attitude toward inclusive education were identified in this study: one was toward self-improvement and the other was toward mainstreaming. The respondents strongly agreed that there is a need to put greater attention on improving their competencies over mainstreaming. Relative to self-improvement, they conveyed that they should continue updating their competencies, do further research, reflect on and find other innovative solutions to the challenges brought about by diverse learners.

Moreover, they strongly agreed to collaborate more with each other and support each other to build team knowledge and develop skills for better inclusion.

Preparedness for inclusive education vis-a-vis the moderator variables

In all three major constructs of the study familiarity with principles, efficacy, and attitude significant differences were observed along the level taught and years of teaching experience. In terms of level taught, teachers in the elementary and secondary levels were found to be significantly behind their counterparts in the pre-school and tertiary levels.

While these teachers do not frequently interact with pre-service teachers, except in the field study course and off-campus training, they have diverse learners in the elementary and secondary levels who need pedagogical attention.

Teachers who had been in the service for 5 to 15 years were found to be significantly not as familiar and efficacious as the other groups. These groups of teachers need training to enhance their competence in inclusion.

Regardless of attendance in orientations on inclusion, the teachers' level of familiarity with the principles and efficacy were comparable. However, in terms of attitude, teachers who had orientation about inclusion did not differ from those who had none with respect to attitude toward self-improvement; there was a significant difference in attitude toward mainstreaming. Those who had an orientation were significantly more agreeing on mainstreaming diverse learners. Undoubtedly, the orientation on inclusion enabled them to gain a better understanding of the nature of mainstreaming in view of the diversity of learners that influenced positively their attitudes.



CALL TO ACTION



BSU- CTE must form learning cells to increase the competence of teachers on inclusion. This can be facilitated by the teachers who had training on inclusion or by experts in the field.



The DepED and CHED, with the LGU and DSWD, should organize intensified orientation or seminar-workshops that include topics and skills that will address the peculiarities of diverse Filipino learners while keeping in mind the uniqueness of the Cordillera culture.



The TEIs should orient their fresh graduates on basic principles and strategies in managing diverse classes, mainstreaming, and the like.



The CHED should consider requiring a three-unit basic course on inclusion in all programs in the tertiary level, six-unit courses (on inclusion) in programs that deal directly with diverse learners, and a three-unit course in the Graduate level programs related to education, social work, psychology, and health services.



The Department of Telecommunications and the media must be engaged to increase the level of awareness of a wider section of the Filipino community. The mass media can serve as a tool to disseminate to the general public the reality of and the need to address the concerns of marginalized individuals.



MAJOR REFERENCES

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ABOUT THE MATERIAL

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