Policy Awareness, Current Practices, and Barriers: A Proposed Upskilling to Special Education Teachers and Receiving Teachers towards Culture of Inclusivity

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of key aspects related to the distribution of Special Education Teachers (SPET) and receiving teachers, their awareness of inclusive education policies, their practices, and the barriers they face. Data collected from diverse educators shed light on age, gender, teaching experience, specialization, policy awareness, and inclusive practices. The study highlights the diverse age distribution among teachers handling the SPED program. Furthermore, it points out the prominence of female teachers in the workforce. A significant proportion of teachers possess limited teaching experience and a limited number of specialized SPED teachers. Regarding policy awareness, both Special Education Teachers (SPET) and receiving teachers clearly

understand inclusive education policies. Inclusive practices among teachers were consistently observed, especially in admission, teaching, and modifying learning packages for learners with special needs. Identifying the lack of training as a major barrier in IE, there is a necessity for professional development to support effective inclusive practices. The findings underscore vital family support services, parental engagement in decision-making, and collaborative opportunities. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends targeted professional development for teachers, awareness campaigns on Indigenous Peoples' rights, encouraging specialization in SPED, strengthening collaboration, and expanding effective practices like the "Child Find" approach.

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), a special program of the UN devoted to assisting national efforts to enhance children's health, nutrition, education, and general welfare, there are reportedly 240 million children with disabilities worldwide. Like all children, kids with disabilities have aspirations and plans for the future, too. Young children, like adults, need a quality education to increase their knowledge and realize their full potential (Llego, n.d.).

However, lawmakers and educational leaders often disregard children with disabilities in policy-making, thus restricting children's access to education and their capacity to participate in social, economic, and political activities (UNICEF, n.d.).

In this sense, inclusion is about providing disabled students the support they need, depending on the impairment. This may include ensuring the school is physically accessible, providing educational resources in alternative formats, supporting the student with a Learning Support Assistant, and providing adequate professional involvement if required (UNICEF, n.d.).

Regardless of any impairments or disabilities that learners may have, teachers should be aware of, or at least familiar with, the necessary learning pedagogies for accommodations and changes needed for these students to succeed in the classroom. Furthermore, they ought to bring all learners together in one classroom and community regardless of how well or poorly they perform in any given subject or skill to maximize learners' full potential. It involves a wide array of teaching strategies and methods that promote the right of every child to an equal education (Allam & Martin, 2021).

Common barriers hinder learners with disabilities from accessing basic education, such as communication, materials, and environmental, emotional,

and attitudinal barriers. To fully implement Inclusive Education (IE) as stated by Republic Act (RA) 11650, schools need to eliminate these barriers by using appropriate assistive technologies and materials to provide accessibility and advocate the culture of inclusivity. As the central figure in the teaching-learning process, teachers must be aware of the policies, practices, and barriers concerning the implementation of inclusive education. This is one of the most important stages in achieving a more just and equitable society. Setting up opportunities for learners to learn, grow, and be themselves is the challenge for teachers to achieve successful teaching-learning endeavors. To remove barriers between various groups of people and ensure everyone feels welcome and appreciated in educational institutions, the school community must continue to work cooperatively.

The Philippine educational system is making significant strides toward inclusive education, and every community must have free access to high-quality education for all learners. With the support of several legal foundations for this significant step toward inclusivity, educators may assist all children in realizing their full potential (Llego, n.d.).

Currently, Calamba City Division in Laguna Province has three (3) identified Special Education Centers: Calamba Integrated School, Prinza SPED Center, and Jose Rizal Memorial School, with a total number of 21 Special Education Teachers and 158 Receiving teachers. In the advent of inclusive education, all schools now must welcome learners with different special needs. Limited number of specialized Special Education Teachers is one of the barriers to successfully implementing the SPED program. Receiving teachers are challenged to equip and capacitate themselves to handle inclusive learners.

To close the education gap for children with disabilities in the Division of Calamba City and to be able to seek support from local government through Special Education Funds, the efforts to foster and monitor inclusive education systems are deemed vital key areas in the implementation of a sound program for Learners with disabilities.

FRAMEWORK

The principle that every learner has the right to access education is central to the critical theory of inclusive education. Inclusive education promotes equity by providing opportunities for all learners, regardless of social, cultural, economic, or physical differences. This means that learners with disabilities should have the same opportunities to access quality education as their non-disabled peers.
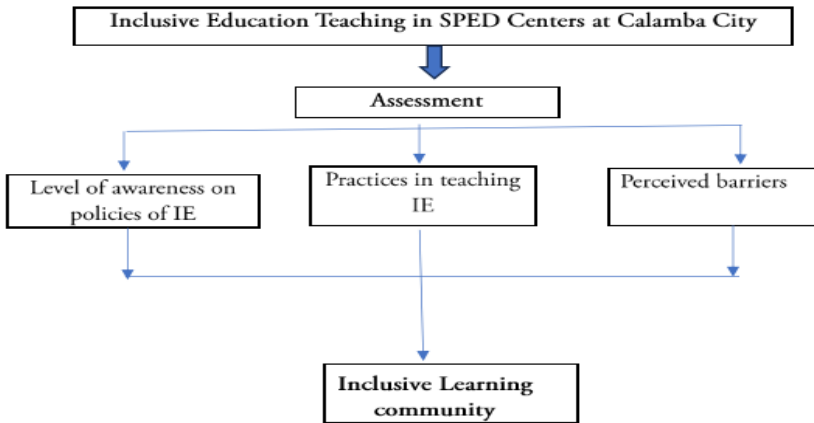
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) claims that behavior can be predicted by behavioral intention and perceived behavioral control, while behavioral intention is a function of attitude towards the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. This study aims to explain and predict teachers' inclusive education intentions and behavior under TPB.

Identified attributes, including teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, feeling social pressure from important others to carry out inclusive education, and confidence in professional training for involved staff, were found to exert significant predictive power on teachers' intention to implement inclusive education. This intention and the confidence in professional training for involved staff predict their actual inclusive practice. Teachers' perception of social pressure and professional training adequacy greatly contribute to predicting their intention and behavior towards inclusive education, respectively. TPB appears to be a sound theoretical framework for understanding teachers' inclusive practice. The results strongly affect teacher empowerment and professional training in inclusive education (Saxena, 2023).

Likewise, the theory of Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1997) can also be a framework for this study. This requires the facilitators of learning to have deep self-reflection and complex problem-solving to become aware of and overcome assumptions and biases about the world. Cultivating an

inclusive mindset demands an investment in mutual vulnerability, reflection, and authenticity from facilitators and learners.

Inclusive education is a critical issue at the forefront of educators' minds. Transformative learning tackles the subject by reimagining current educational practices and renovating teaching strategies. Educators of inclusive education shall demonstrate that inclusion is an educational reform movement that can only succeed if educational institutions and practitioners rethink the meaning, substance, and purpose of education and adopt the new missions, patterns of decision-making, understandings of teaching and learning, pedagogies, collaborative roles, and classroom practices that flow directly from the inclusive reform movement.

The Department of Education in the Philippines provides enough funds to convert Special Education Centers (SPED Centers) to Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (ILRCs), but with limited resources to fund special education, insufficient training of teachers, and lack of reasonable accommodations exacerbate barriers in Inclusive Education (GOV.PH, 2022). As a result, many learners with disabilities are excluded from mainstream education and often face substandard special education or no education at all. To address these challenges, education systems should adopt inclusive policies and practices that ensure every learner receives quality education. This approach involves recognizing the diverse needs of learners with disabilities and creating an enabling environment that accommodates these needs through the provision of resources, training of teachers, and appropriate curriculum modifications. It is also essential to encourage de-stigmatization of learners with disabilities by promoting positive attitudes towards them. This can be achieved through awareness-raising campaigns, peer support, and inclusive school environments that celebrate diversity and promote learning and participation for all.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed (1) to assess policy awareness on various legal bases concerning inclusive education, (2) to describe teachers' current practices in handling, modifying, and teaching learners with disabilities, and (3) to identify barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education. The data to be determined will be used in school planning to upskill Special education and receive teachers in inclusive education at DepEd Calamba City.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Due to the limited number of Special Education teachers in the Division, the researcher included Receiving teachers who are Regular teachers handling Learners with Special Needs (LSEN). Furthermore, if teachers in private schools were included in the study, it would give other perspectives on how IE is being implemented in these schools. Finally, since Inclusive Education is part of the educational system, it is hoped that future researchers will include not only those schools offering SPED but also all schools in the Division in randomly selected participants to have an in-depth outlook on implementing IE in Calamba City.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive method of research was utilized in this study. It describes the characteristics of a phenomenon, situation, or population. It uses quantitative and qualitative approaches to describe problems with little relevant information. Descriptive research accurately describes a research problem without asking why a particular event happened. By eliciting the responses, patterns can be formed, and the descriptive method answers how patterns change, what caused the change, and when the change occurred instead of dwelling on why the change happened (HARAPPA, 2021). This method elicited teachers' responses regarding their awareness of Inclusive Education policies, current practices of teachers, and barriers they face in dealing with them.

Research Site

The study was conducted in three public schools in the Division of Calamba City, particularly in three schools offering Special Education Programs: These schools were chosen because there were specialized teachers in SPED and trained Receiving teachers.

Respondents

Calamba City Division in Laguna Province, Philippines has three (3) public schools identified as Special Education Centers. The names of the schools appeared in this study after the approval of the school heads. The only secondary school is Calamba Integrated School located in Barangay Bañadero, and the two elementary schools are Prinza SPED Center at Barangay Barangay Prinza and Jose Rizal Memorial School at Lopez Jaena Street as these schools in Calamba

City offer Special Education Program. The total enumerated twenty-one (21) Special Education Teachers and 19 randomly selected Receiving teachers were the respondents of the study.

Instrumentation

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was crafted as a product of thorough readings of related literature and validated by three experts in Special Education in the Division of Calamba City: a Special Education Teacher III at Calamba Integrated School, the Coordinator of SPED in the same school, and the Division Education Program Supervisor in SPED served as participants in gathering relevant responses.

The research instrument was composed of two sets of questionnaires. The first part dealt with the demographic profile of the respondents, while the second part was designed to rate their knowledge, practices, and barriers to implementing inclusive education in their schools.

The researcher adopted a Likert-type five-point rating scale to assign numerical values to estimate the extent or magnitude of the items measured. Furthermore, the results were tabulated and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

Table 2

Level of awareness of respondents on the different policies concerning inclusive education. The following Likert scale was used:

Numerical Scale	Numerical Interval	Mean Descriptive Rating
5	4.21-5:00	Fully aware
4	3.41-4.20	Aware
3	2.61-3.40	Neither aware nor not aware
2	1.81-2.60	Not aware
1	1.00-1.80	Not fully aware

Table 3
Level of current practices of SPET and Receiving teachers towards the admission, handling/teaching, and modification of learning packages for different types of Learners with special needs. The following Likert scale was used:

Numerical Scale	Numerical Interval	Mean Descriptive Rating
5	4.21-5:00	Always
4	3.41-4.20	Often
3	2.61-3.40	Sometimes
2	1.81-2.60	Seldom
1	1.00-1.80	Never

Table 4
Perceived barriers to inclusive education according to the respondents. The following Likert scale was used:

Numerical Scale	Numerical Interval	Mean Descriptive Rating
5	4.21-5:00	Strongly Agree
4	3.41-4.20	Agree
3	2.61-3.40	Neither Agree nor Disagree
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree

Table 5
The ways the school community creates an inclusive culture to increase the participation rate of learners with special needs. The following Likert scale was used:

Numerical Scale	Numerical Interval	Mean Descriptive Rating
5	4.21-5:00	Strongly Agree
4	3.41-4.20	Agree
3	2.61-3.40	Neither Agree nor Disagree
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree

Table 6

Professional development can be given to teachers towards sound implementation of inclusive education. The following Likert Scale was used:

Numerical Scale	Numerical Interval	Mean Descriptive Rating
5	4.21-5:00	Very important
4	3.41-4.20	Important
3	2.61-3.40	Fairly important
2	1.81-2.60	Slight important
1	1.00-1.80	Not all important

Validation of Instrument

The content of the survey questionnaire was carefully studied and constructed by the researcher with the help of trainers and resource speakers during the National Upskilling Training and Seminar for School Heads in Special Education in Zambales, Philippines, where the researcher participated. This rare opportunity was given to school heads handling the SPED Center in the Division of Calamba City. The handouts and materials during the training were used to construct the survey questionnaire. Likewise, the researcher proposed a draft of the questionnaire and solicited reviews from experts in the field. Two validators came from Special Education teachers of Calamba Integrated School and one from the School head of Prinza SPED Center.

After crafting the questionnaire, the experts' comments, suggestions, and recommendations were integrated into the construct. After the content validation, the instruments were pilot-tested on three Special Education teachers and 2 Receiving Teachers from the three SPED Centers in the Division.

To avoid errors in the construction and implementation of the survey instrument and the interpretation of results, the researcher provided hard copies of the instruments and administered them to sample participants who were not actual participants of the study. They were asked to comment on the questionnaire about the clarity and content of the survey questionnaire. Construct validity was achieved by pilot testing, review by experts in Special Education in the Division, and literature reviews as bases for questionnaire development. Ambiguity, grammar, and erroneous items were resolved during content validation.

The researcher administered the Online Survey Questionnaire using Google Forms to the sampled participants using Cochran's Formula with a 0.5 level of significance. It is a method of collecting standardized information from a sample of people representing a population through structured questions. This

method was utilized to elicit responses from teachers regarding their profile and relevant questions revealing their policy awareness, current practices, and barriers in implementing IE. The online questionnaire survey was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software and reported using the mean. After the final testing, the link for the survey was sent online to the school heads, who then facilitated the sending of a link to their respective teacher-respondents.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought the approval of the school division Superintendent to conduct a study among SPED and Receiving teachers at the identified schools with SPED programs. Likewise, a request letter was also sent to the School heads of the three schools after the approval of the Superintendent. It was explained to the participants that their study involvement was voluntary. They were assured that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality and that the results would be used to improve the SPED program.

An ethical review was sought from the Curriculum Instruction Division for the actual data collection. Inform consent were sent to the respondents, who secured their favorable responses before proceeding to the survey.

Data Analysis

An online survey questionnaire using Google Forms was sent to the respondents using Cochran's Formula with a 0.5 level of significance. Total enumeration of the SPED teachers and randomly selected receiving teachers were the respondents of the study. It was a method of collecting standardized information from a sample of people representing a population through structured questions.

This questionnaire was forwarded to school heads for their SPET and Receiving teachers to answer. Before that, a letter of request was given to the School's Division Superintendent and the school heads of identified elementary and secondary schools to ensure that ethical standards in administering the instrument were followed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 7

Profile of Special Education Teachers and Receiving Teachers in the Division of Calamba City

Age		
Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-30	12	30.00
31-40	11	27.50
41-50	12	30.00
51-60	5	12.50
Total	40	100.00
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	7	17.5
Female	33	82.5
Total	40	100.00
Years in Service	Frequency	Percentage
0-3 years	22	55
4-6 years	8	20
7-9 years	3	7.5
10 years and above	7	17.5
Total	40	100.00
Specialization	Frequency	Percentage
SPED	15	37.50
English	4	10.00
Science	6	15.00
Mathematics	4	10.00
Mapeh	1	2.50
Araling Panlipunan	3	7.50

Filipino	1	2.50
General Education	4	10.00
Business Management	1	2.50
TLE	1	2.50
Total	40	100.00

Table 7 presents the distribution of SPED teachers and receiving teachers in terms of age. Most teachers are 20–30 and 42–50 years old, which obtained 30%. On the other hand, the age group of 31–40 obtained 27.50%. The lowest percentage of 12.50% was obtained in the age group of 51–60.

Many teachers were female (82.50%), while male teachers were only 17.50%. Most teachers have teaching experience of 0–3 years, with 55%, while there are 8 teachers with 4-6 years in service. There were only 7 teachers, or 17.50%, with years of service of 10 years and above.

In terms of specialization, there were only 15 or 37.50% SPED teachers, while the remaining 25 or 62.50% specialized in English, Science, Mathematics, MAPEH, Araling Panlipunan, Filipino, General Education, Business Management, and TLE.

Sadly, the special education department needs more teachers to handle the SPED program. The increasing enrolment of learners with special needs requires sufficient, qualified, and specialized teachers who would embark on the challenging role of SPED/Receiving teachers.

Aranas and Cabahug (2017) revealed a few cases of moderate to high coverage of the inclusion competencies in understanding exceptionality, collaboration, inclusive instructional strategies, and inclusive assessment under the professional education courses in Region 10 or Northern Mindanao institutions.

To augment the needs for SPED teachers in the Division of Calamba City, the agency provides training for receiving teachers (non-specialized SPET) to equip them with the minimum skills and knowledge to carry out the tasks of receiving teachers.

Realizing the significance of training for non-SPED teachers, a study by Allam and Martin (2021) revealed that most teachers handling children with learning disabilities did not receive any special needs education training from the school. They feel they are not qualified to teach children with learning disabilities. Moreover, teachers assigned to SPED classes lack strategies for dealing with learners with disabilities. These challenges may be attributed to the non-specialization of the SPED baccalaureate.

Table 8

Level of Awareness of SPET and Receiving Teachers on Policies of Inclusive Education

Policies	Mean	Interpretation
1. The 1987 Philippine Constitution (Art. XIV, Sec. 1 & 2) establishes, maintains, and supports a complete, adequate, and integral education system relevant to the people's and society's needs.	4.18	Aware
2. RA 10533, Sec. 8. Inclusiveness of enhanced basic education shall mean implementing programs designed to address learners' physical, intellectual, psychosocial, and cultural needs.	4.23	Fully Aware
3. RA 8371 Sec 2 The state shall recognize and promote all the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs).	4.20	Aware
4. DO 44 s. 2021 The policy covers the provision of the following educational services: assessment, curriculum, teachers-learning delivery, learning environment and resources, and roles and responsibilities of the different levels of governance.	4.18	Aware
5. - DO 21, s. 2020 –Policy Guidelines on Adopting the K to 12 Transition Curriculum Framework for Learners with Disabilities, articulating the principles, features, and standards that will establish a common understanding of the transition of LWDs in public and private schools nationwide.	4.15	Aware
6. DO 72, s. 2009-Inclusive Education as Strategy in Increasing Participation Rate of Children This is to address of unserved learners with disabilities and provide appropriate education within the inclusive classroom setting.	4.18	Aware
7.RA 8371 Sec 2 The state shall recognize and promote all the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs)	4.13	Aware
Composite Mean	4.18	Aware

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Fully Aware; 3.41-4.20 Aware; 2.61-3.40 Neither Aware nor Not Aware; 1.81-2.60 Not Aware; 1.00-1.80 Not at All Aware

The composite mean of 4.18 indicates that the SPET and receiving teachers know about inclusive education policies. The highest mean of 4.23 was obtained from the policy indicator of RA 10533, Sec. 8. Inclusiveness in enhanced basic education shall mean implementing programs designed to address learners' physical, intellectual, psychosocial, and cultural needs. While the lowest mean of 4.13 was obtained from the inclusive education policy "RA 8371 Sec. 2: The state shall recognize and promote all the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (ICCs and IPs)".

Teachers' awareness of various legal bases for Inclusive Education is notable in the data collected. It can be concluded that they are fully armed with the legal framework essential to implement IE.

On the contrary, in an article written in the Philippine Journal of Society and Change in Social Science in Diliman, Philippines, the study of Muega (2016) revealed that there were insufficient provisions and no established procedure for including Children with Disabilities (CWD) in the general education setting. Currently, not much is known regarding the practice of IE in the Philippines. The result of the study was based on the use of a modified survey questionnaire; the data was collected from 91 respondents who have firsthand knowledge and lived experiences with inclusive schools located in Quezon City. Metro Manila, Philippines. The researcher tested the hypotheses after an open coding was completed and each qualitative research question was answered. The researcher found out that the participants do not question or refuse the practice of inclusion in their respective general education settings. However, they acknowledge that they are unsure if their concept of IE conforms to recognized definitions. Participants were uncertain about whether their claimed methods and strategies are effective enough to meet the demands of high-quality inclusive education.

Some IE school teachers need to improve their skills for special education needs (Wenda et al., 2020; Bekele & Ago, 2020). Many research studies reveal that a school's quality and student attainment depend significantly (Wenda et al., 2020; Waychunas, 2020).

The Schools Division of Calamba, through the Education Program Supervisor of Special Education, always provides orientation with the designated teachers of SPED so them to be fully aware of the guidelines and send both soft and hard copies of the Legal Bases for SPED implementers and teachers that would serve as their Bible in the implementation of SPED program in their respective schools.

This further connotes that SPED and Receiving teachers' awareness of the legal bases of the SPED Program depends on the collaborative efforts of teachers' perse and shared governance to create a clear understanding of what to consider when dealing with learners with special education needs and familiarize themselves with these preceding mandates.

Table 9

Current Practices of SPET and Receiving teachers towards the admission, handling/ teaching, and modification of learning packages for different types of Learners with special needs

Current Practices	Mean	Interpretation
1. The school conducts Child Find, where teachers locate where these children are through the family mapping survey, advocacy campaigns, and networking with local health workers.	4.45	Always
2. In the assessment aspect, there is a continuous process of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the child using formal and informal tools for proper grade placement.	4.40	Always
3. There is a program option implemented by Regular schools with or without trained SPED teachers. They ensure this program will provide educational services to children with special needs.	4.38	Always
4. Teachers provide curriculum modification in adaptations and accommodations to foster optimum learning based on individual's needs and potentials.	4.43	Always
5. Advocate parental involvement in preparing children for academic, moral, and spiritual development. Parents shall observe children's performance, volunteer to work in the classroom as teacher aide, and support other parents.	4.40	Always
Composite Mean	4.41	Always

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always; 3.41-4.20 Often; 2.61-3.40 Sometimes; 1.81-2.60 Rarely; 1.00-1.80 Never

The composite mean of 4.41 indicates that the SPET and receiving teachers always observe current practices in the admission, handling/teaching, and modification of learning packages for different Learners with special needs. The highest mean of 4.45 indicates that the school engages in Child Find, where teachers use family mapping surveys, advocacy campaigns, and networking with

local health workers to find where these children are. This implies that the school's Child Find approach is a commendable effort that combines multiple strategies to identify and support children with special needs. By combining family engagement, awareness campaigns, and collaboration with health professionals, the school creates a comprehensive system that enhances the chances of identifying children requiring additional support and providing appropriate interventions. This approach ultimately contributes to a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

The lowest mean of 4.4.38 was obtained from the indicator stating that there are program options implemented by Regular schools with or without trained SPED teachers. They ensure this program will provide educational services to children with special needs. Implementing a program option for children with special needs within regular schools can significantly benefit inclusion and diverse learning environments. However, the success of such a program hinge on appropriate training for teachers, tailored support, and adequate resource allocation to ensure that all students receive a high-quality education.

It is good to note that teachers handling learners with special education needs always exemplify what are being expected of them. Based on the indicators, their practices towards the admission, handling/teaching, and modification of learning packages for different types of Learners with special needs are always performed/ illustrated by them. Though lacking the essential technical know-how to teach these learners, teachers demonstrated dedication and passion to perform their duties to their full potential.

Table 10
Perceived Barriers to Inclusive Education

Barriers	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Attitudinal Barriers	3.10	Possibly	7
Physical Barriers	3.73	Probably	3
Inappropriate Curriculum	3.29	Possibly	6
Untrained Teacher	3.83	Probably	1
Inadequate Funding	3.81	Probably	2
Poor Organization of the Education System	3.40	Possibly	4.5
Policies Barrier	3.40	Possibly	4.5
Overall Composite Mean	3.51	Probably	

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Definitely; 3.41-4.20 Probably; 2.61-3.40 Possibly; 1.81-2.60 Probably Not; 1.00-1.80 Definitely Not

Table 10 presents the overall barrier to inclusive education, as perceived by the SPET and receiving teachers, is the lack of training. The proficiency and outlook of SPED teachers are instrumental in shaping the lives of students with learning challenges. Their expertise, empathy, advocacy, and ability to provide individualized support contribute to the student's academic progress, emotional well-being, and overall development. A positive and skilled SPED teacher can be a beacon of hope for students who might otherwise struggle in a traditional educational setting, ultimately helping them reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. Proficient SPED teachers collaborate with their students, parents, regular education teachers, and support professionals. They advocate for their students' needs and ensure that they receive appropriate accommodations and resources. This collaboration creates a holistic support network for the students.

Significantly, Solheim's study (2017, as cited in Acdal, 2019) suggests that teachers need to find out more about their teaching craft by including professional development in their schedules to look for new ways to handle students and learn more strategies for addressing students' needs.

A well-trained teacher is optimistic toward learners with special education needs, which is vital for creating a nurturing and empowering educational environment. This attitude goes beyond just teaching academics; it influences students' emotional well-being, motivation, and success. An optimistic teacher can change the trajectory of a student's educational journey, empowering them to reach their fullest potential and become confident, capable individuals.

In the same vein of thought, Acdal (2019) implies that teachers need to be trained in handling students with special needs during their baccalaureate education course, and these teachers need to know the appropriate ways to provide accommodations to students with exceptionalities.

Furthermore, Abdoula-Dhuny (2021) revealed in his study that the main barriers identified were the lack of special education training and proper infrastructure. Training is therefore recommended to build the competency of educators and rectors in inclusive practices. Appropriate infrastructure and support for educational materials and personnel should also be provided.

Similarly, Allam and Martin (2021) mentioned that encountering problems in teaching SPED is inevitable because of the limited teaching approaches in handling special education classes. It is proposed that SPET and receiving teachers continuously receive training to enhance and upgrade their strategies since learners have various unique needs that must be catered to. One of the statements of a teacher handling SPED learners argued that when teaching learners with disabilities and one has a limited teaching approach, one should venture into improving their approaches. Match the positive experience

in teaching special education with applicable techniques in the actual teaching situation. A school for learners with special needs must be where students learn how to learn and thus successfully acquire learning strategies.

Teacher competence is crucial to increase and understand concepts of IE. Teachers who enrolled in training for inclusive education had greater pedagogical competencies than those who did not participate. In addition, teachers with more teaching experience should have stronger pedagogical abilities according to our understanding of the theory, and this should apply to abilities for teaching children with special needs.

Likewise, Teacher Camia contributes to the development of the learners despite their learning disabilities. This corroborates with the study of Aquino et al. (2019) that balance and holistic development of the children should be ensured, and to attain these, teachers should invest in improving strategies for teaching learners with special educational needs.

Furthermore, Balta et al. (2015) found the influence of training on course instructor attainment. In line with Wenda et al. (2020) work on this impact on student performance gains, a meta-analysis could give valuable statistical data to instructional leaders.

Finally, Friend and Cook (1992) stated that IE teachers should cooperate with normal school teachers, such that (a) cooperation is focused on common interests, (b) collaborative relationships focus on joint responsibilities, (c) mutualized resources, and (d) coordinated reciprocal transparency of children with special needs.

Funding is another fundamental issue in Inclusive Education. Successful implementation of inclusive education requires specific funding, in addition to that provided by the healthcare and social protection systems, to give learners with officially recognized special educational needs (SEN) the same learning opportunities as their main-stream peers (without SEN). Such funding enables education systems to consider learners' educational needs and support parents in meeting the direct and indirect costs of education. Furthermore, increasing numbers of learners with SEN being educated in main-stream settings can be correlated with the specific resources that countries allocate to enable their education system to educate learners equitably and effectively with SEN in mainstream education (Ebersold & Meijer, 2016).

Similarly, the study of Allam and Martin (2021) revealed that provisions of human and material resources are also crucial for implementing SPED needs. The Department of Education should provide adequate resources, equipment, and teaching material for learners with diverse learning needs.

According to Banicki and Murphy (2014), inclusive education must be

built on the following pillars: costing must account for funding requirements for teachers and students to achieve targets; schools that meet these targets must be funded based on performance; the financing criteria must be based on school effectiveness and improvement. A group of experts must make well-thought-out judgments regarding funding. They grieved over the cost of hiring additional teachers and support staff and the requirement to fund extracurricular activities, assistive technology, supportive equipment, and other school necessities. Although it is admirable that schools raise funds to hire more staff in the form of teachers, this model cannot last long because it depends on parents' desire to accommodate. Despite the district's support and involvement, there are not enough assistive devices available in schools, even if these devices are set up purposely to assist one another with equipment and assistance devices. In addition, there is a need but a lack of financing for extracurricular activities.

Another problem in implementing inclusivity is physical barriers. Without sufficient financial assistance, inclusive education programs cannot be operated. According to UNESCO (2009), a significant barrier to inclusion is a lack of financing. The ongoing professional development that keeps specialists and classroom teachers current on the best techniques might be hampered by insufficient financing. Many schools lack the resources to effectively serve students with special needs, and local governments are often unwilling or unable to contribute financially. Environmental obstacles include doors, hallways, ramps, stairs, and play areas.

Addressing these barriers requires new thinking that focuses on removing barriers experienced by some children that lead them to become marginalized due to contextual factors. The implication is that overcoming such barriers is an important means of developing effective forms of education for all children. In this way, an emphasis on inclusion and equity becomes a way of achieving the overall improvement of education systems, as signaled by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [O.E.C.D.] (2012).

The collaboration of SPET and receiving teachers with parents, regular education teachers, and support professionals form a strong support network that benefits the students. The findings also highlight the significance of family support services, parental engagement in decision-making, and collaborative opportunities. These elements are crucial for creating an inclusive educational experience that meets the diverse needs of students with special needs. By involving parents as advocates, educators empower them to actively participate in their child's education journey, fostering a sense of ownership and understanding beyond the classroom.

Similarly, Opertti et al. (2014) discussed the importance of broadening the concept of inclusion to reach all children, assuming that every learner matters equally and has the right to receive effective educational opportunities. In this

way, greater clarity was achieved regarding inclusive education.

Table 11

School community can create an inclusive culture to increase the participation rate of learners with special needs through…

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Visionary Leadership	4.53	Strongly Agree	2
Educator Collaboration	4.18	Agree	6
Re-focused use of assessment	4.41	Strongly Agree	4
Support for Students and Staff	4.34	Strongly Agree	5
Effective Parental Involvement	4.63	Strongly Agree	1
Collaborative Teaching Methods	4.52	Strongly Agree	3
Overall Composite Mean	4.44	Strongly Agree	

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Strongly Agree; 3.41-4.20 Agree; 2.61-3.40 Neutral; 1.81-2.60 Disagree; 1.00-1.80 Strongly Disagree

The overall composite mean of 4.44 indicates that the SPET and receiving teachers strongly agreed with all the indicators on how the school community can create an inclusive culture to increase learners with special needs participation. The highest mean of 4.63 was obtained from the indicator of effective parental involvement, followed by 4.53 from the indicator of visionary leadership. The lowest mean of 4.18, interpreted as agree, was obtained from the indicator of educator collaboration.

The findings mentioned above implied that the perspective of a SPED teacher underscores the significance of family support services, full parent engagement in decisions, and collaborative opportunities. These components are necessary for creating a coherent educational experience that caters to the various requirements of children with special needs. By working with parents, SPED teachers can create an environment where students receive comprehensive care, tailored strategies, and holistic support to reach their fullest potential. SPED teachers understand that parents are essential advocates for their children. Teachers empower parents to advocate for their child's needs within the school and the broader community by engaging parents in decision-making processes.

This advocacy ensures that the student's educational journey is supported and understood beyond the classroom walls. Moreover, initiating change, articulating a clear vision, building consensus, involving stakeholders, and fostering a collaborative culture are all essential to successful inclusion efforts. When school leaders prioritize and champion inclusive education, they set the foundation for a learning environment that values diversity, empowers all students, and fosters growth and success. SPET and receiving teachers acknowledge that school leaders must approach inclusion as a long-term commitment. Consistency in their efforts, even when facing obstacles, demonstrates dedication to creating a truly inclusive learning environment that benefits all students. School leaders should prioritize training and professional development for teachers to equip them with the skills needed to teach in inclusive classrooms. Adequate training empowers teachers to effectively address diverse learning needs, implement accommodations, and create a supportive learning environment.

CONCLUSIONS

SPET and Receiving teachers have limited teaching experience but possess a good understanding of almost all policies on inclusive education except for the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (ICCs and IPs), indicating a potential area for focused education and awareness-building. Moreover, SPET and receiving teachers consistently observe current practices in admission, teaching, and modifying learning packages for learners with special needs.

The overarching barriers to implementing IE in the Division are the lack of training among teachers handling SPED, inadequate funding, and physical barriers.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of this study could be translated to a provision of training/upskilling for Special Education and Receiving teachers to be funded by the Schools Division of Calamba City to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive education. Moreover, regular meetings of SPET and Receiving teachers in the division could be arranged to share their best practices to benefit special learners. Education program supervisors may consider devising a mechanism to continuously monitor the implementation of inclusive learning and promote a culture of inclusivity in the learning environment.

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