



PERCEPTIONS TO CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Chona G. Magtubaⁱ

Master in Early Childhood Education,

Doctor of Education,

Teacher III,

Governor Leopoldo N. Lopez Sr. Memorial School,

City of Mati, Philippines

Abstract:

Early childhood educators' perception of inclusive education is likely consistent with their attitude towards the practice of inclusion in the kindergarten class. This study aimed to determine the relationship between primary school teachers' perception of contextual factors of inclusive education and their attitude towards inclusion. This study used the descriptive correlational research design. The data were obtained from a sample size of 82 public school primary education teachers who were selected through purposive sampling. A researcher-made data instrument was used to collect the data. Results of the study showed that early childhood educators have a strong perception of the contextual factors of inclusive education, and their attitude is in agreement with inclusion. Specifically, curriculum registered the highest mean score among the contextual factors, while teacher training registered the lowest mean score. In terms of attitude, professional development registered the highest mean score, while opportunity to learners registered the lowest mean score. Further, a strong significant relationship exists between perceptions of the contextual factors of inclusive education and attitudes towards inclusion. A positive perception of teachers in the context of an inclusive education curriculum is crucial to developing attitudes towards inclusion. Professional development and curriculum alignment are recommended to strengthen their confidence in their engagement in the inclusive class.

Keywords: contextual factors, attitude of teachers, inclusive education, early childhood educators perception, Philippines

1. Introduction

The implementation of inclusive education is hounded by problems arising from the attitude of resistance in accommodating learners with developmental issues and

ⁱ Correspondence: email chona.magtuba@deped.gov.ph

learning problems. Such a resistant attitude is shaped by inadequate school resources and facilities, a firm curriculum, and untrained teachers who are stressed by increasing workloads when implementing different approaches with the same lesson. Respectively, both teachers and learners were affected by this scheme in terms of the supervision of student progress and allocation of quality teacher-pupil interaction. In this regard, it is imperative to determine the magnitude of the influence of these factors on the formation of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

Though inclusion programs have noble intentions to provide all learners with an increased awareness and understanding of individual differences, their success in the delivery of quality learning among local primary schools is still uncertain given the teachers' dilemma of the current state of teacher training, curriculum, support system and increasing size of the inclusive class. More than teachers' compliance with the requirements of inclusive education, the current education system must also focus on interventions that foster teacher's positive collective attitude towards inclusion.

Globally, Children with Special Educational Needs (CSEN) are increasingly educated together with their abled peers in a practice known as inclusive education (IE). This is in response to the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education held in Salamanca, Spain. Alongside this development, participating nations subscribed to the principle of promoting the objective of Education for All (EFA). Schools across the globe have complied with the necessity and urgency of providing education for children, youth, and adults with special education needs within the regular educational system (UNICEF, 2019). Additionally, a study on these realities is significant given that the evidence in research shows that teachers' attitudes significantly impact whether or not the learning environment is enabling for CSEN (Monsen, Ewing, Kwoka, 2014). Indeed, understanding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion is a crucial initial step in the design and evaluation of initiatives to improve attitudes towards CSEN (Antonak & Livneh, 2000) and, by implication, to increase inclusive behaviours (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013) and to develop more inclusive classroom learning environments (Monsen et al., 2014).

In the Philippines, both in the cities and remote or rural areas, many public schools remain ill-equipped in terms of the capacity of teachers to handle learners with disorders or disabilities. This could be one of the reasons why many general education teachers in the Philippines doubt their capacity to teach in an inclusive school. The problem is further aggravated by the difficulty of meeting other vital requirements of sound, inclusive education. At this point, teachers, whether trained or otherwise, will have to accept that they will be spread too thinly in an inclusionary setting because the presence of students with special needs in an oversized group of students if taken seriously, requires the preparation of more than one lesson plan. While inclusion policy has already been adopted in the Philippines, many schoolteachers have yet to fully appreciate the value of IE (Muega & Echavia, 2011).

In Davao City, Orogo (2007), as cited in Gomez (2012), in her study, proved that the Davao City schools division has only partially implemented inclusive education

because of their limited access to school facilities, such as ramps to accommodate students on wheelchairs. However, it was found out that teachers have a positive attitude toward inclusive education. Moreover, Ignacio & Jawati (2008), as cited in Gomez (2012), found out that inclusive education is not clear and not well grasped by teachers in school districts of Davao City and Digos City. In their study, it was recommended that teachers should be oriented on their roles in an inclusive education setting. Given the multi-faceted domains of attitude towards IE, which include the teacher's knowledge about CSEN, their emotional reaction to CSEN and their actual or intended behavior towards CSEN, it is also imperative to study the primary school teacher's attitude towards IE in relation to the prevailing contextual factors in the implementation of inclusion. This is worth noting since the survey of literature provided limited information as to the educators' attitudes and perceptions about the contextual factors of inclusive education.

2. Research Objective

The main objective of this study was to determine the relationship between primary school teachers' perception of contextual factors to inclusive education and their attitude towards inclusion for the school year 2020 - 2021. More specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the primary school teachers' level of perception of contextual factors to inclusive education, which includes the following:
 - 1.1 curriculum,
 - 1.2 teacher training,
 - 1.3 support structures and system, and
 - 1.4 class size?
- 2) What is the primary school teachers' level of attitude towards inclusive education in terms of:
 - 2.1 opportunity for learners,
 - 2.2 social and emotional development of learners,
 - 2.3 teacher's workload,
 - 2.4 professional development, and
 - 2.5 program of activities?
- 3) Is there a significant relationship between the perception of primary school teachers to contextual factors and their attitude towards inclusive education?

2.1 Null Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between primary school teachers' perception of contextual factors and their attitude towards inclusive education.

3. Methodology

This study applied the quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The decision to use this design conforms to the intentions of the study in providing the description of the sample's profile, perception of inclusive education contextual factors and attitude towards inclusion. On the other hand, the goal of using the correlational research strategy in this study is to examine and describe the relationships between variables. More specifically, the purpose of the study is to establish that a relationship exists between perceptions and attitudes associated to inclusive education and to describe the nature of their relationship.

3.1 Research Locale

This study was conducted at Mati City during the School Year 2020-2021. The data came from the government primary schools within the jurisdiction of the Department of Education Mati City Division. It is the educational center of the province of Davao Oriental. The City Schools Division of Mati supervises these schools located on the south-eastern side of [Mindanao](#). The Schools Division Office of the City of Mati was officially launched and installed on May 29, 2012, pursuant to Section 50 of the Republic Act. 9048 and through the DepEd Central Office Memorandum dated May 12, 2012, authorizing the establishment of the Schools Division Office of the City of Mati, Philippines.

3.2 Research Respondents

The sample size of the study consisted of 82 primary private school teachers who were non-randomly selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is where the researcher makes the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. It is a technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of informants. The researcher's choice in the inclusion of the respondents lies in the criteria that the pertinent information shall come from teachers teaching in inclusive classes.

3.3 Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made survey instrument to gather information about the sample of government primary school teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards inclusive education. The first part of the survey tool generated information about the respondent's sex, age, civil status, number of years of teaching in inclusive classes, and the type of learning disability of CSEN in their class at the time of the implementation of this study. The second part generated respondents' perceptions of contextual factors. The third part obtained information about the attitude towards inclusive education. Each indicator of the perception of contextual factors and attitude towards inclusive education was rated using the 5-point Likert scale. This study's survey tool was subjected to validity to ensure that it can accurately measure what it intends to measure (Li, 2016). At the same time, the reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. Along

this line, the computed Cronbach Alpha from the pilot test results indicated a high-reliability coefficient for perception towards contextual factors of inclusive education (.96) and for the attitude of teachers toward inclusive education (.95).

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher sought the endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of the Holy Cross of Davao College for the distribution of the research instrument to the respondents. Upon approval, the researcher asked permission from the office of the Schools Division Superintendent of the Department of Education, Tagum City Division. Subsequently, the School District Supervisor and School Heads of the government primary schools were notified about the intended survey. With the secured consent given by the prospective respondents, the researcher proceeded to administer the research instrument. Along with actual data collection, the researcher provided light snacks and drinks and adequate writing supplies as needed. Lastly, after the retrieval of the wholly filled research instrument, the data were tabulated and collated on the Excel spreadsheet for proper statistical applications.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents will be treated with the appropriate parametric statistical tests for the description, comparison and measurement of the relationships of variables. *Mean* was used to measure the average responses for the contextual factors of inclusive education and attitude towards inclusion. Each indicator's verbal description and interpretation were judged according to the average value of the sample's responses. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the significance of the hypothetical relationship between the measures of perception and attitude.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Primary School Teacher's Level of Perception to Contextual Factors of Inclusive Education

The primary education teachers' perception of the contextual factors of inclusive education. The description of contextual inclusive education indicators, including the curriculum, teacher training, support structure and system and class size, is based on the computed mean scores of responses. The data in Table 1 disclosed that the perception of primary education about the compatibility of curriculum for inclusive education is high based on the computed mean of 3.95. In the same manner, the adequacy of the class is perceived as high based on the computed mean of 3.73. Meanwhile, the presence of a support structure and system is high based on the computed mean of 3.61. In addition, the perception of the adequacy of teacher training is highly true, as defined by the computed mean of 3.59. In general, the contextual factors of inclusive education are perceived to be highly accurate based on the computed mean of 3.72. The resulting means imply that teachers have a positive perception of the contexts of inclusive education.

Table 1: Primary School Teacher’s Level of Perception of Contextual Factors of Inclusive Education

	Mean	Verbal Description
Curriculum	3.95	High
Teacher Training	3.59	High
Support Structure and System	3.61	High
Class Size	3.73	High
Overall Perception of Teachers on Inclusive Contextual Education	3.72	High

Note: 1.00-1.49 (Very Low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (Moderate); 3.50-4.49 (High); 4.50-5.00 (Very High)

The primary school teachers’ agreement with the context of curriculum for inclusive education implies that educators need to meet and adapt to the government. This is in light of the reality that they are generally too inexperienced to be able to handle the demands of the new curriculum, and they are generally too inexperienced to be able to handle the demands of the new curriculum, and this could result in educators being reluctant to introduce new concepts and approaches to their teaching (Hays, 2009). The respondents’ perception of the class size in inclusive classrooms must be designed for optimal educational environments to consider the effect of class size on learning to reduce distractions, thus enhancing learning (Dewey, 2010). Aside from the perceived need for adequate class sizes for inclusive classrooms, primary school teachers' need for support structure and system is clearly defined by their definite need to be supported in implementing inclusive classrooms. This need for support provided to these educators, namely from parents, principals, colleagues and special needs educators, is often lacking in schools or just ineffective in helping the educators deal with the pressures of inclusive education (Hammond et al., 2003). In general, the perception of the veracity of contextual factors in inclusive education follows Gregory’s (1970) Top Down Processing Theory, which states that perception is a constructive process that relies on top-down processing. Stimulus information from the environment is frequently ambiguous, so to interpret it, higher cognitive information, either from past experiences or stored knowledge, is required in order to make inferences about what we perceive. Since these primary school teachers have ample time for teaching experience in inclusive schools, according to this theory, perception as a hypothesis was based on their prior knowledge.

4.2 Primary School Teacher’s Level of Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

The attitude of primary education teachers toward inclusive education is shown in Table 2. Their attitude is collectively determined by their attitude towards the provision of inclusive education in terms of the opportunity to learners, promotion of the social and emotional development of learners, teacher workload, professional development, and program of activities. Primary education teachers register a high rating with the need for professional development based on the computed mean of 4.26. A rating was also noted on the need for a program of activities for inclusive education, as evidenced by the computed mean of 4.12. In the same view, they rated high for learners' social and emotional development, given the computed mean of 3.92. In addition, teachers gave a

high rating on the complexity of teacher workload in inclusive education based on the computed mean of 3.81. Moreover, teachers marked a high rating for the given opportunity to learners based on the computed mean of 3.75. Generally, the attitude of teachers towards inclusion was rated as high, as shown by the computed mean of 3.97.

Table 2: Primary School Teacher’s Level of Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

	Mean	Verbal Description
Opportunity to Learners	3.75	High
Social and Emotional Development of Learners	3.92	High
Teacher Workload	3.81	High
Professional Development	4.26	High
Program of Activities	4.12	High
Overall, Teacher Attitude Toward Inclusive School	3.97	High

Note: 1.00-1.49 (Very Low); 1.50-2.49 (Low); 2.50-3.49 (Moderate); 3.50-4.49 (High); 4.50-5.00 (Very High)

The ratings imply an attitude of solid acceptance of inclusive education. The attitude of respondents’ agreement on the complexities of teacher’s workload in inclusive classes agrees with previous criticism as it caused extra work for teachers (Gunnþórsdóttir & Jóhannesson, 2014); it may be that for special-education teachers, inclusion does not signify a similar threat of additional workload as for classroom and subject teachers. This result indicates that workload considerations are significant when teachers evaluate inclusion. The attitude of primary school teachers concerning pupils' opportunities in inclusive classrooms indicates agreement with Kang and Martin (2018) that students evaluated as needing special education services must be further assessed to provide educators with information regarding the degree of impairment. Generally, the collective attitude of teachers toward inclusive education connects to Hoveland’s and Sherif’s (1980) Social Judgement Theory connects because it explains how existing attitudes produce distortions of attitude-related objects and how these judgments mediate attitude change. It emphasizes that a person’s initial attitude towards an issue is an anchor for the judgment of attitude-related stimuli. In the context of the study, the stimuli refer to the perception of teachers in the context of inclusive education shaped by their own personal experience.

4.3 Relationship Between the Perception of Primary School Teachers to Contextual Factors and Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

Table 3. presents the test for the hypothesized relationship between the primary school teachers’ perception of the contextual factors of inclusive education and their attitude towards inclusive education. The basis for testing the significance of the relationship is the comparison of the computed t-value and the critical tabular value at a 0.05 level of confidence. Table 3 reveals that there is a strong positive significant relationship between the perception of primary school teachers toward the contextual factors of inclusive education and their attitude toward inclusive education since the computed t-value is greater than the critical t-value. This implies that the study succeeded in rejecting the null

hypothesis. In particular, the positive relationship of these variables means that as teachers' perception strengthens about the contextual factors of inclusive education, their attitude towards inclusive education becomes stronger in terms of their agreement with it.

Table 3: Relationship Between the Perception of Primary School Teachers to Contextual Factors and Attitude Towards Inclusive Education

Variables	Computed r	Computed t-value for significant relationship	Critical t-Value 0.05	Decision	Interpretation
Perception to Contextual Factors of Inclusive Education and Attitude Towards Inclusive Education	0.684	11.51	1.99	Reject Ho	Significant

This significance of the relationship is supported by the framework of Ajzen's (2011) planned behavior theory. Ajzen noted that attitude serves as a concept in psychology and that planned behavior theory indicates a relationship between behavior and intentions. Deciding on what conduct to exhibit is known as behavioral intention, which requires procedures to affect any plan of action (Hodge, Wright & Bennett, 2017). Teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education can be a form of belief that may influence their behaviors. According to the theory of planned behavior, attitudes reflect a person's perceptions, either negative or positive, towards a particular behavior (Wu, 2015). From a planned behavior perspective, behaviors toward inclusive education of teachers stem from their perceptions and beliefs about children with disabilities and the support provided towards inclusion by the government. Odongo and Davidson (2016) contended that the perceptions of teachers will transform into positive ones if the necessary resources and other forms of support mechanisms are put in place. Bornman and Donohue (2015) explained that there is a positive correlation between teachers' beliefs and their behaviors.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In view of the findings above, the study concluded that primary school teachers find the actuality of contextual factors of inclusive education, particularly in its curricular design and implementation. In this sense, teachers have perceived the relevance of the curriculum in the delivery of learning for children with special educational needs. Similarly, their attitude manifested adherence to inclusive education while emphasizing a profound attitude toward the need for professional development among teachers of inclusive schools. This indicates that primary teachers express their interest in improving learning delivery in inclusive classes through continuing professional development. The strong positive significant relationship of these variables implies that a better perception

of inclusive education's contextual factors will draw a more positive attitude towards inclusion. This further means that primary school teachers saw the relevance of inclusive schools in addressing the unique learning needs of children with special educational needs and accepted the emerging realities of inclusion.

5.2 Recommendations

In light of the concluding remarks of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are drawn: The Department of Social Welfare and Development should collectively mobilize its resources to support the goals of inclusion programs of Special Education in the public school division. Such support could be channeled through the programs for teacher training and improvement of the learning resources. School heads of primary schools should enrich the curricular framework of inclusive education programs for primary schools. They must reinforce the curriculum with appropriate trajectories of professional development of their teachers. Teachers of primary schools should discuss with school administrators and other stakeholders for support in relation to the effective management of inclusive classes. Parents of CSEN should closely collaborate with the teachers regarding their children's essential needs so that teachers can deliver the appropriate teaching strategies that enable the best learning opportunity for CSEN. Children should experience the appropriate learning and utilize the facilities and resources they need for development. Future researchers are suggested to investigate the alignment of curriculum and professional development initiatives for inclusive education.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest. I confirm that this manuscript is my original work, has not been previously published or submitted simultaneously for publication elsewhere, and has undergone proofreading by one or more professional English editors for grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and phrasing.

About the Author(s)

Chona G. Magtuba is a Master in Early Childhood Education and Doctor of Education graduate at Holycross of Davao College, Philippines. She is currently holding the position of Teacher III at Governor Leopoldo N. Lopez Sr. Memorial School under the Department of Education, City of Mati, Philippines, specifically teaching early childhood education subjects.

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Chona G. Magtuba
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