

Awareness and Training Needs of Teachers in Inclusive Education



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ABSTRACT: The primary objective of this research was to evaluate the awareness levels and identify the training requirements of educators in inclusive education. The study encompassed 73 teachers from the Grade School, Junior High School, and Senior High School divisions of a private university within the purview of the Division of Iloilo City, Philippines for the academic year 2023-2024. An adapted questionnaire was utilized as the primary research tool. The analysis used frequency count, percentage, mean, rank, standard deviation, and ANOVA. The findings revealed that, when collectively considered, the educators demonstrated an intermediate level of awareness concerning inclusive education, mainly focusing on Professional Knowledge Regarding Inclusive Education and Exceptional Children, Knowledge of Instructional Practices and Content, and Knowledge in Planning and Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment. Moreover, the results emphasized the pressing need for training, with respondents emphasizing the significance of being effectively trained in areas such as Assessing Student Needs, Resourcing Classroom Learning, Enhancing Collaboration and Communication with Parents, Colleagues, and the Community, Evaluation of Student Progress, and Goal Setting. Furthermore, the study also explored potential differences in awareness levels across various demographic factors, including age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and previous training experiences. The analysis revealed that these demographic factors did not significantly influence the awareness levels among the teachers regarding inclusive education.

KEYWORDS: awareness, inclusive education, training needs

INTRODUCTION

As defined by UNICEF, inclusive education is the practice of having all children, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, in the same classroom within the same schools. This approach ensures that all learners, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, or disabilities, have equal access to learning opportunities and resources. The recent enactment of Republic Act No. 11650, titled "Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act," represents a significant stride towards advancing inclusive education by emphasizing fair and inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The directives from the Department of Education further accentuate the importance of inclusive education in fostering the active participation of all students. These policies encompass various programs and services, including healthcare provisions, rehabilitation services, support centers, and interagency collaborations. Moreover, ongoing training sessions are being conducted for administrators, teachers, and school staff, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate inclusive classrooms effectively.

At institutions like Ateneo de Iloilo, creating a conducive learning environment that supports all students is paramount. Hence, enhancing educators' awareness and readiness to implement inclusive education practices is crucial for success. A comprehensive study is essential to assess teachers' awareness levels and identify their training requirements in inclusive education. This research evaluates teachers' knowledge of inclusive education based on age, educational background, grade levels taught, years of service, and participation in training programs. By identifying the specific training needs of educators and understanding the significance of their awareness levels across different demographic categories, this study seeks to promote inclusive practices within the institution and the wider educational community.

The success of inclusive education hinges on the preparedness and awareness of educators, who play a crucial role in supporting the diverse learning needs of their students. In Iloilo City, Ateneo de Iloilo has been at the forefront of advancing inclusive education practices. However, the level of awareness and training among teachers regarding inclusive education remains a subject that requires further exploration. Conducting a thorough examination of the awareness levels and training needs of educators at Ateneo de Iloilo is essential to strengthening the successful implementation of inclusive education within the institution and

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contributing to the broader goal of promoting inclusive practices within the city. By enhancing the capacity and readiness of educators to effectively support the learning and development of all students, Ateneo de Iloilo-SMCS can continue to fulfill its mission of providing a nurturing and inclusive educational environment for every learner, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. The study aimed to assess the level of awareness and training needs of Ateneo teachers in inclusive education in Iloilo City for the school year 2023-24.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness among the teachers regarding inclusive education as an entire group and when grouped according to age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings in the past 5 years?
2. What are the perceived training needs of the teachers in relation to inclusive education as an entire group in terms of age, educational background, grade level taught, Length of service, and number of trainings in the past 5 years?
3. Are there significant differences in the level of awareness among the Teachers regarding inclusive education when they are grouped according to age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings in the past 5 years?

HYPOTHESIS

1. There are no significant differences in the level of awareness among the teachers regarding inclusive education when they are grouped according to age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings in the past 5 years.

METHODS

A quantitative method research design is utilized to investigate the level of awareness and training needs of teachers in inclusive education, which provides a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The data are gathered through surveys or questionnaires administered to a large sample of teachers. The surveys include questions about their awareness of inclusive education, training, and experiences in this area, as well as perceived professional development and support needs. The study's respondents are seventy-four (74) teachers from the three school units: grade school, junior high school, and senior high school.

The dependent variables are teachers' identified awareness level and training needs in inclusive education. The study's independent variables are the teachers' age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of training in the past 5 years. The study's respondents are classified according to age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of training in the past 5 years.

The instrument for data collection for the quantitative analysis is the validated questionnaire adopted by Jalipa (2023). One null hypothesis is tested at a .05 significance level and is used to probe the study further. Quantitative methodology uses frequency, percentages, rank, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and One-Way ANOVA for independent sample statistical techniques to address the research questions. It consists of three parts: Part I inquired about the personal details of the respondents. This part gathers information regarding age, educational background, grade level taught, length of teaching experience, and number of trainings underwent. Part II includes 19 items from the Knowledge Questionnaire, which measured the respondents' current awareness of teaching and managing learners in education. Part III measures the skills of teachers in a classroom climate of acceptance, collaboration, and communication with parents, colleagues, and community, assessment of students' needs, classroom management, goal setting, resources for classroom learning, instructional technique, personal curricula, and evaluation of student progress. The Cronbach Alpha is used and tested at a .05 significance level in the study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The hypothesized relationship between the independent and dependent variables is shown in the Schematic Diagram in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Relationship Between the Independent Variables and Dependent Variables of the Study

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RESULTS

This part contains the salient results of the study. Table 1 shows the level of awareness among the teachers regarding inclusive education in terms of Knowledge in Planning and Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment when respondents were taken as a whole and classified according to age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings in the past 5 years, the respondents rated it intermediate which is comparable to the other categories of knowledge in inclusive education in this study which are Professional Knowledge Concerning Inclusive Education and Exceptional Children and Knowledge in Instructional Content and Practice.

Table 1

Level Of Awareness Among the Teachers Regarding Inclusive Education in terms of Knowledge in Planning and Managing The Teaching and Learning Environment when Respondents were taken as a Whole and Classified according to Age, Educational Background, Grade Level Taught, Length of Service, and Number of Trainings in the Past 5 Years

Professional Knowledge	Mean	N	SD	Interpretation
Total	2.74	74	0.59	Intermediate
Educational Background				
Bachelor's Degree	2.71	66	0.54	Intermediate
Master's/Doctoral Degree	2.92	8	0.93	Advanced
Age				
Below 30	2.74	53	0.55	Intermediate
30 – 39	2.86	12	0.71	Advanced
40 – 49	2.53	9	0.67	Intermediate
Length of Service				
1 to 5	2.76	51	0.58	Intermediate
6 to 10	2.72	10	0.64	Intermediate
11 to 15	2.65	6	0.63	Intermediate
More than 15	2.65	7	0.72	Intermediate
Number of Trainings				
None	2.75	12	0.50	Intermediate
1 to 3	2.67	32	0.58	Intermediate
4 to 6	2.69	22	0.60	Intermediate
7 and Above	3.11	8	0.73	Advanced
Grade Level Taught				
Grade School	2.73	35	0.58	Intermediate
Junior High School	2.81	26	0.60	Advanced
Senior High School	2.59	13	0.61	Intermediate

Knowledge Scale: 3.61 - 4.00 Not Important 2.81 – 3.60 Advanced 2.21 – 2.80 Intermediate
1.61 - 2.20 Novice 1.00 - 1.60 Fundamental Awareness

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The intermediate awareness of the teachers on inclusive education in terms of knowledge of instructional content and practice may stem from different factors. Dheesha (2020) states that the success of inclusive education is based on the attitude and acceptance of teachers and peer groups. Likewise, teachers need to know about the different disability conditions and teaching methods to handle students with disabilities in the classroom environment. The results of this study revealed these skills and knowledge. Teachers must also know the different learning environments and opportunities for all students in an inclusive classroom.

In the study of Joseph and Ganesan (2021), they found that teacher awareness of inclusive education can be influenced by gender, locality, and marital status. Although these variables may not be included in this investigation, teachers commonly desire to ensure that their students understand the lesson by creating a learning community that is inclusive of the learners' personal and intellectual diversity. In other words, when inclusion is being discussed, what is paramount is the teachers' understanding of the significance of inclusion to create outcomes that could influence the education of children with special needs.

In connection with the perceived training needs of the teachers, the top 5 in the list of respondents are Assessment of Student Needs, Resources for Classroom Learning, Collaboration and Communication with Parents, Colleagues, and Community, Evaluation of Student Progress, and Goal Setting. These categories consistently rank in the top ranks of the respondents' training list. Among these, the Assessment of Student Needs is rated as highly important, while the rest are essential training the respondents must undergo. This can be gleaned from Table 2.

Triviño-Amigo et al. (2022) concurred that teachers' continuous training had helped them improve inclusive education. From this, they gained knowledge, high-quality instruction, and continuous professional development, which empowers teachers in their different educational roles.

Table 2

The perceived training needs of the respondents in relation to inclusive education when taken as an entire group

Entire Group	Mean	N	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Classroom Climate	2.77	74	0.84	Important	9
Collaboration	2.32	74	0.89	Important	3
Assessment	2.12	74	0.87	Highly	1
Classroom Management	2.46	74	0.86	Important	6
Goal Setting	2.42	74	0.92	Important	5
Resources	2.25	74	0.91	Important	2
Instructional Techniques	2.52	74	0.91	Important	7
Personal Curricula	2.56	74	0.92	Important	8
Evaluation	2.40	74	0.90	Important	4

Skills Scale:	3.61 – 4.00	Not Important	2.81 – 3.60	Less Important
	2.21 – 2.80	Important	1.61 – 2.20	Highly Important
		1.00 – 1.60		Very Highly Important

Finally, Table 3 reveals the level of awareness among the respondents regarding inclusive education in terms of Professional Knowledge Concerning Inclusive Education and Exceptional Children, Knowledge in Instructional Content and Practice, and Knowledge in Planning and Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment did not vary when respondents were classified according to age. The findings reveal no significant difference in the level of teachers' awareness based on the profile variables regarding age. This result is analogous to the results of the respondents, who were classified according to their educational attainment, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings.

The lack of significant variations in awareness levels among respondents based on demographic factors is a noteworthy finding, highlighting a consistent level of awareness of inclusive education terms across different groups, including age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings.

Table 3

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Differences in the level of awareness among the respondents regarding inclusive education in terms of Professional Knowledge Concerning Inclusive Education and Exceptional Children, Knowledge in Instructional Content and Practice, Knowledge in Planning and Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment when Respondents were Classified according to Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Professional Knowledge						
Between Groups	1.567	2	.783	2.340	.104	Not Significant
Within Groups	23.769	71	.335			Significant
Total	25.336	73				
Instructional Content						
Between Groups	1.119	2	.560	1.303	.278	Not Significant
Within Groups	30.484	71	.429			Significant
Total	31.603	73				
Planning and Managing						
Between Groups	.569	2	.284	.806	.451	Not Significant
Within Groups	25.054	71	.353			Significant
Total	25.622	73				

DISCUSSION

Overall, the awareness rating in this study is considered intermediate, indicating room for improvement in this aspect. It is observed in the study also that individuals with Master's/Doctoral degrees rated their awareness higher than those with bachelor's degrees, suggesting a positive correlation between higher levels of education and a deeper understanding of inclusive education terms.

Moreover, the disparity in awareness levels across different age groups is interesting, as younger and older groups rated their awareness differently. Identifying specific knowledge areas where older respondents considered themselves novices underscored potential opportunities for focused training and skill development. Furthermore, the expressed training needs of teachers, which included areas like Assessment of Student Needs, Classroom Learning Resources, Collaboration and Communication with Parents, Colleagues, and the Community, Classroom Management, and Evaluation of Student Progress, underscored the value of ongoing professional development in inclusive education. It is noted that respondents who have undergone multiple training sessions tended to perceive certain aspects of inclusive education as less crucial, hinting at a potential saturation point in training effectiveness.

In summary, the findings of this research provide crucial insights into the existing landscape of teachers' awareness of inclusive education and pinpoint specific areas where their training needs improvement. By identifying these areas, this study underscores the importance of implementing targeted training programs and offering opportunities for professional development. While the conclusions drawn may pertain to a particular school, they likely resonate with educators in other private schools. Moving forward, teachers, parents, school administrators, department of education supervisors, curriculum specialists, and prospective researchers must collaborate to create more dynamic and inclusive educational environments for students. By working together, this collective effort can pave the way for a more responsive, enriching, and supportive educational experience for all learners.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were formulated based on the findings:

1. The overall rating of the awareness was deemed intermediate, showing that there is room for improvement in this aspect. It was notable that those with Master's/Doctoral degrees rated their awareness higher than those with Bachelor's degrees, suggesting that higher levels of education may correlate with a deeper understanding of inclusive education terms.
2. Furthermore, the variation in awareness levels based on age groups was interesting, with younger and older age groups rating their awareness differently. The identification of specific knowledge areas where older respondents rated their understanding as novice highlights potential areas for targeted training and development.

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3. The expressed training needs of teachers, such as Assessment of Student Needs, Resources for Classroom Learning, Collaboration and Communication with Parents, Colleagues, and Community, Classroom Management, and Evaluation of Student Progress emphasized the importance of continuous professional development in inclusive education.
4. It was interesting to note that respondents who had undergone numerous training sessions viewed certain aspects of inclusive education as less important, indicating a possible saturation point in training effectiveness.
5. The lack of significant differences in awareness levels among respondents based on various demographic factors is an important finding. This suggests that regardless of age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings, there is a consistent level of awareness of inclusive education terms among the teachers evaluated. Overall, this evaluation or study provides valuable insights into the current state of teachers' awareness of inclusive education and training needs. These highlights areas for further improvement through targeted training and professional development opportunities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, herewith are the recommendations for a Successful Inclusive Education in schools:

Learners. Clienteles should embrace their uniqueness and that of others in the class. As they take advantage of the modifications or accommodations in school, they should radiate positivity in school, at home, and the community. They should assimilate the importance of the roles they play and cooperate in following the rules that are observed for a meaningful inclusive classroom.

Teachers are the primary factors in practicing an impactful inclusive education. Differentiated trainings on Assessment of Student Needs, Resources for Classroom Learning, Evaluation of Student Progress, Collaboration and Communication with Parents, Colleagues, and Community and Goal Setting suited to the mentors should be organized for a more knowledgeable and confident formators of the school. Mentors regardless of age, educational background, grade level taught, length of service, and number of trainings must be role models in delivering inclusive education.

Parents. Engage parents are partners in children's education. They should foster open communication, be involved in decision-making processes, provide resources and support to teachers, staff, and the community so they can understand better and advocate for their children's needs.

School Heads. Provide on-going professional development in schools and should offer appropriate and regular trainings and workshops for teachers and staff on inclusive teaching practices, understanding diverse learning needs, and creating an inclusive classroom environment. The activities and programs should be collaborative to foster cooperation and ownership among teachers, staff, parents, and specialists to ensure an Ignatian, well rounded, and holistic support system for students with diverse needs. They should allocate budget for the workshops of teachers in connection with assessment of student needs, evaluation of student progress, and goal setting. Resources for classroom learning such as resource rooms and materials should also be funded including the provisions for an effective collaboration and

Dep Ed Supervisors/ Curriculum Specialists. The Department of Education should work on standardizing policy implementation procedures and providing support to schools/regions struggling with enforcement. Consistent policy execution should be done to eliminate inequalities and promote a cohesive approach to inclusive education nationwide.

Future Researchers. The researchers are called for to inform the school and the community regarding the positive impacts the inclusive education can offer to the persons, families, society, and the nation. They are also called forth to evaluate the practices and procedures of inclusive education in school.

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