



**EXTENT OF IMPLEMENTATION, CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES
OF NON-SPED (SPECIAL EDUCATION) ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ON
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: BASES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-qualitative study determined the extent of implementation of inclusive education on teaching preparation and competence and academic policy as a whole group, length of teaching experience for 2 years and below, and for BA with MA units and MA degree were high extent. As to those with teaching experience of 3 years and more and Bachelor's degree were moderate extent. On physical plant and facilities as a whole group, those with teaching experience for 2 years and below, and for BA with MA units were high extent. The length of experience on 3 years and more and educational qualification on Bachelor's and MA Degrees have moderate extent. There were no significant differences when classified according to length of experience and educational qualification. The challenges were Lack of training in teaching learners with special education needs, dealing with learning problems, inadequate knowledge in making learning materials, inadequate financial and parental support and heavy teaching workload. The

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coping strategies were employing contextualized activities and materials, exhibit patience and love, parental education and seek professional help.

Keywords: *Implementation, Challenges, Coping Strategies, Non-SPED, Elementary Teachers, Inclusive Education, Enhancement Program*

INTRODUCTION

Republic Act 11650, also known as the "Instituting a Policy and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act," was passed in March 2022. It reinforced the need for our nation's educational system to adapt to institutional change. As stipulated in section 2 of the Act, it acknowledged, safeguarded, and advanced the rights of all students with disabilities, including those who are members of linguistic, ethnic, or religious minorities or people of indigenous origin, to an education based on equal opportunity. It also made this education mandatory and accessible to all students with equal opportunities to receive an inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for lifelong learning.

In order to fulfil its commitment to provide comprehensive, superior, fair, and culturally-based primary education, the Department of Education offered inclusive education as part of its mission to advance every Filipino citizen's right to such educational services (Macabenta, 2023).

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It made it possible for students with special education needs to interact in regular classroom settings.

The Department of Education (DepEd) cooperated with the Philippines' commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2008) to change the country's special education (SPED) system to an inclusive one, with the primary goal of integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms to study alongside regular students (Dela Fuente, 2021).

Teachers must stay up to date on the latest developments in the field of education, be aware of the philosophical underpinnings of these changes, and be prepared to take on the challenge of shifting from the traditional way of teaching into an inclusive one.

Inclusive education was introduced as early as 2018 in the Schools District of Cabatuan II through the mainstreaming program of SPED education. Moreover, in 2020, Inclusive Education was pioneered in selected schools due to the introduction of Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEs) tagging system in the Learner Information System (LIS) and was given special allocation funds to support necessary activities such as Physician's Diagnosis and procurement of suited learning materials to aid the teaching-learning process.

It is an honor for educators to welcome students with special education needs into a regular classroom. It has, however, raised a number of difficult questions and problems, including the reluctance of non-SPED teachers to accommodate Learners with Special Education Needs

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(LENSs), the lack of necessary training and expertise, and the substantial information regarding how to manage students with learning difficulty in a regular classroom setting.

This context provided motivation to conduct a mixture of quantitative and qualitative study detailing the extent of implementation of non-SPED elementary teachers on inclusive education and the challenges met and how do these challenges were responded.

Moreover, this study aimed to document experiences of regular elementary teachers, most of whom are new to teaching inclusive classes. It also gave a clearer picture of inclusive education in the Schools District of Cabatuan II. As a result, the study clarified inclusive education and add to the body of knowledge worldwide.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presented the research methods, research design, respondents of the study, sampling design, data gathering procedure, research instrument, data analysis and statistical tools that were used in analyzing and interpreting data in the study.

Research Method

This research used a mixed-method approach. The quantitative portion was conducted through descriptive research.

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Descriptive research, according to Calderon (2012), is a purposeful process of collecting, evaluating, categorizing, and tabulating data about current circumstances, practices, beliefs, processes, trends, and cause-and-effect relationships, as well as providing a sufficient and accurate interpretation of the data—with or without the use of statistical methods.

Descriptive Research describes what already exists and may lead to the discovery of new information and significance. It is a type of research that observe, characterize, and record elements of a situation as it naturally transpires. This entails gathering information that offers a description or account of certain people, organizations, or circumstances.

For qualitative research, phenomenological research was employed.

In a phenomenological research study, primary in-depth interviews with up to ten persons are the major method of information collection, according to Creswell (2013).

Research Design

A survey research design was used in the study. A survey is a method for gathering information in a methodical and regular manner. Typically, this entails formulating a series of inquiries that are posed either an interview or a questionnaire (Community Based Research Handbook, 2012) as cited in (Subang, 2022).

A survey's main goal is to deliver a broad summary of the features of a population at a specific point in time. Most descriptive and correlational studies are suitable for using the survey approach (David, 2005) as cited in (Lantoria, 2016).

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Descriptive-survey design attempts to observe, describe the aspects under study and to establish relationships of different quantifiable variables and record details of a situation as they emerge spontaneously, as this may lead to the discovery of new information and significance (Polit & Hungler, 2001) as cited in (Sancada, 2016).

For qualitative part, the participants' answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed using a thematic analysis.

This was used to gather the data for the challenges and coping strategies of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education.

Thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2013) is used to identify, analyze and report the qualitative findings through inductive coding.

Participants of the Study

The respondents were the 21 non-SPED teachers from seven elementary schools in the district of Cabatuan II that has started implementing inclusive education. Purposive sampling was employed in choosing the respondents.

Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was used to obtain the desired number of respondents.

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According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposeful sampling refers to the process of selecting research participants who have been deliberately chosen based on their capacity to further the goals of the study.

Research Instrument

The instrument used was the adopted questionnaire from the study "Implementation of Inclusive Education: A Region-wide Study in the Philippines" by (Cayabyab, 2023). The instrument was made up of items covering the three areas of Inclusive Education namely teacher preparation and competence, physical plants and facilities and academic policies. Each item in the instrument was answerable with the following responses: (5) Always; (4) Often; (3) Sometimes; (2) Seldom and (1) Never.

Data Gathering Procedures

A written permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division of Iloilo was requested. Upon approval, the researcher met the different elementary school heads that had implemented inclusive education in the district of Cabatuan II and given letters with the attached approved request from the Division Superintendent. During the meeting with the school heads, the purpose and the procedure in the conduct of the study were explained to them by the researcher. The tentative schedule of the conduct of the research was arranged with them based on their availability. The researcher informed the school heads that the participation of the

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teachers in the study was needed especially those teachers accommodating learners with special education needs.

District Planning Coordinator was consulted regarding the elementary schools in the district of Cabatuan II that had implemented the inclusive education and the total number of teachers per school teaching inclusive education. The desired respondents were realized through purposive sampling. The researcher personally gave the instruments to the purposively selected teachers for every elementary school. The instruments were retrieved, responses of the respondents were tallied and encoded and processed using version 21 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

For the qualitative portion, open-ended questions were used to find out the difficulties in implementing inclusive education and coping mechanisms. The answers were then translated into a theme analysis transcription. Based on the findings of both qualitative and quantitative data, an enhancement program was created.

Data Analyses

After collection of the data, the data were tallied and examined. The statistical interpretation of the mean scale and its related verbal interpretation were applied to quantitative data.

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Scale	Description
4.21 -5.00	Very High Extent
3.41 – 4.20	High Extent
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate Extent
1.81 – 2.60	Low Extent
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low Extent

For qualitative part, thematic analysis procedure was utilized to obtain the prevailing common themes from the responses of the respondents.

Thematic analysis is the process of finding patterns or themes in qualitative data. According to Maguire & Delahunt (2017), the aim of a thematic analysis finding themes that is significant or intriguing patterns in the data and using these themes to discuss the research or make a point about a problem are the goals of a thematic analysis. This involves compiling, evaluating, and interpreting the collected data to make sense of it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study determined the extent of implementation, challenges, and coping strategies of Non-Sped (Special Education) Elementary teachers on inclusive education in the Schools District of Cabatuan II.

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The different areas on the extent of implementation are teacher preparation and competence, physical plants and facilities and academic policies.

The study employed a mixed-method research. The qualitative method applied a phenomenological approach utilizing thematic analysis to the open-ended questions, whereas the quantitative method used a descriptive-survey study methodology.

There were 21 respondents taken purposively from seven elementary schools in the Schools District of Cabatuan II, Schools Division of Iloilo.

A research tool that was taken from Cayabyab (2023), was utilized to collect information regarding the extent of inclusive education implementation.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study. For descriptive statistics, the frequency count, percentage, and mean were used. For inferential statistics, Kruskal Wallis H test and Mann Whitney U Test were used set at .05 level of significance. Thematic analysis was used to generate the themes from the responses of the participants on the challenges and coping mechanisms.

The statistical computations were processed through the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Software version 21.

The following were the findings of the study.

The extent of implementation of inclusive education as assessed by teachers in terms of teacher preparation and competence as a whole group and in terms of length of teaching

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experience for 2 years and below and educational qualification for BA with MA units and Master's degree were high extent. When teachers were classified according to the length of teaching experience on 3 years and more and educational qualification on Bachelor's degree were moderate extent.

The extent of implementation of inclusive education as assessed by teachers in terms of physical plant and facilities as a whole group and in terms of length of teaching experience for 2 years and below and educational qualification for BA with MA units were high extent. When teachers were classified according to the length of teaching experience on 3 years and more and educational qualification on Bachelor's degree and Master's Degree were moderate extent.

The extent of implementation of inclusive education as assessed by teachers in terms of academic policies as a whole group and in terms of length of teaching experience for 2 years and below and educational qualification for BA with MA units and Master's degree were high extent. When teachers were classified according to the length of teaching experience on 3 years and more and educational qualification on Bachelor's degree were moderate extent.

There were no significant differences in the extent of implementation of inclusive education as assessed by teachers in terms of teacher preparation and competence, physical plant and facilities, and academic policies when classified according to length of service and educational qualification.

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The challenges of non-SPED elementary teachers on inclusive education were identified and these are Lack of training in teaching learners with special education needs, dealing with learning problems, Inadequate knowledge in making instructional materials, Inadequate financial and parental support and Heavy teaching workload/preparation.

The coping strategies yielded from the results of the interview were Employing Contextualized Activities and Materials, Exhibit Patience and Love for teaching learners with special education needs, Parental Education and Seek Professional Help and Assistance.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

Non-SPED teachers responded to the mandate of the Department of Education to implement inclusive education despite apprehensions and challenges. Thus, they moderately to highly extent implement inclusive education in terms of teacher preparation and competence, physical plant and facilities and academic policies.

Teacher preparedness and competence of teachers are in place of the full implementation, facilities and policies governing the implementation are also ready and it all signal maximum readiness of the implementation of the inclusive education.

Length of teaching experience to learners with special education needs and educational qualification do not directly affect teacher's preparedness and responsiveness.

Varying challenges were noted and corresponding coping strategies were employed in order to address the gaps thus facilitated the smooth implementation of the inclusive education.

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Evidently, a disparity exists between the results of the level of implementation of inclusive education as assessed by teachers with the challenges and coping strategies they narrated in the conducted interview.

CONCLUSION

In view of the results of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

Review the standards of teacher competence and preparation, and also the eligibility of teachers to handle and teach in an Inclusive classroom.

Physical facilities must be provided in order to become fully ready in the full implementation and notably consider what facilities do LSEs needs such as but not limited to the respective disabilities they manifest.

Academic policies must be reviewed reiterating the roles, functions and responsibilities of SPED and non-SPED teachers handling LSEs so that matters are addressed accordingly and effective implementation is achieved correctly.

Training and workshops about teaching, instructional material preparation, and dealing with learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom should be provided to all the teachers in the district in order to prepare and equipped them with knowledge and strategies they need.

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Awareness about Inclusive education and Learners with Special education needs must be oriented to all the parents of each school for them to have an open mind, knowledge and acceptance so that they will fully support their children's educational journey.

Parents are also encouraged to render constant support to their children and work collaboratively with the school and teachers as their roles are very vital in their children's achievement and progress.

School heads are encouraged to support teachers especially those having learners with special education needs by providing school funds for teaching materials and other necessary aid. Also closely monitor the implementation and report the challenges encountered in the field and make recommendations on how to address them.

DepEd officials are encouraged to review the policies governing inclusive education implementation and the teacher's capacity to implement and its corresponding school.

Curriculum planners need to review the program policy and consider the teacher qualification and preparedness on how to handle diverse learners. They should also consider adjusting teacher's workload in order for teachers to function effectively. They may also encourage to develop and assess enhancement programs developed in the regional and division offices addressing the concerns on inclusive education.

Future researchers may also explore on the variables not included in the study and may opt to conduct purely qualitative research in order to capture the very essence of inclusive

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