

# Extent Of Implementation Of Inclusive Education Among Kindergarten Teachers

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*Abstract* — This study aimed to assess the extent to extent of implementation of inclusive education among kindergarten teachers. Eighty-six (86) kindergarten teachers from the School Districts of San Carlos City Schools Division, selected using complete enumeration technique, were involved as respondents in this study. The study determined the extent of implementation of the inclusive education (IE) by the Kindergarten teachers (KTs).

Most of the respondent-KTs belong to the 26-35year old age bracket, females, married, and master's degree holder with units leading to a /doctor's degree. Typically, majority of the respondents have a monthly family income of 21,194.00 to 43,8 28.00 Php, have 4-6 years in service, 1-3 relevant in-service trainings, 4 or more memberships in professional organizations. The grand overall weighted mean (GOWM) of the extent of implementation of the IE, in all areas, by the respondent-KTs is 1.41, equivalent to "never" (N) in descriptive rating, and "not extensive" in transmuted rating. Significant mean differences in the extent of implementation of the IE by the respondent-KTs are found across the variables, 1) age, 2) highest educational attainment, 3) position, 4) monthly family income, and 5) years in service. Significant correlations are indicated in the extent of implementation of the IE and certain variables, namely: 1) age, 2) monthly family income, 3) years in service, and 4) number of memberships in professional organizations.

The following conclusions are forwarded: The respondent-KTs who are typically mature females, and from the middle class families are very much qualified as kindergarten teachers, in terms of academic attainment, experience, in-service trainings, and memberships to professional organization. Their implementation of the IE which is generally "not extensive" is in great need of improvement to level up their involvement in this important program of the DepEd. The profile variables (independent variables) in this study are able to differentiate the extent of implementation of IE by Kindergarten teachers. Thus, these should be used in future studies on IE. The dependent variable, which is the "extent of implementation of IE by the respondent-KTs" are associated with these variables.

The following are strongly recommended: Many of the respondent-KTs are not yet Master's degree graduates, hence, it is strongly recommended that a scholarship grants be instituted and implemented to encourage kindergarten teachers to pursue advanced academic degrees in accredited institution. Further studies on the implementation of the IE should include more independent variable (profile variables) together with those used in this study. Furthermore, future studies on the implementation of the IE, in other grade levels in the revised DepEd curriculum, should be conducted under the auspices of accredited graduate institutions.

*Keywords* — *inclusive education (IE), philosophy, policies, and practices, kindergarten teachers (KTs)*

## I. Introduction

The demand for inclusive education has gained momentum globally in recent years and is now reverberating at all educational levels. This movement is based on the idea that all children should have equal access to high-quality education in a caring and supportive setting, regardless of their aptitude, background, or needs. Kindergarten is a crucial time when ideals of acceptance, diversity, and belonging are first developed for young students. It is more than just the start of formal schooling.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education advocates for inclusive education, which is not merely a concept but a legal duty. However, kindergarten teachers are frequently responsible for bringing this admirable vision to life in the classroom. These early childhood educators must balance cultural expectations, various training levels, and few resources while fulfilling the needs of a diverse student body. There are also concerns about how successfully inclusive education is actually being implemented at the kindergarten level, even with regulations and training initiatives designed to encourage inclusion. To what degree do educators feel prepared, empowered, and encouraged to incorporate inclusive practices into their everyday work?

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) believes that every learner matters equally. However, millions of individuals around the world are still denied access to education due to a variety of factors, such as gender, sexual orientation, language, nationality, ethnicity, or social origin, as well as aptitude or economic status. Further, from curricula to methodology and instruction, inclusive education aims to recognize and eliminate all obstacles to education. The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, Sustainable Development Goal 4, and the Education 2030 Framework for Action, which place a strong emphasis on inclusion and equity as the cornerstones of high-quality education, serve as the organization's primary sources of guidance in this field. (Van- Miegheem, 2021)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a roadmap for achieving a more equitable and sustainable future for all. Specifically, Goal No. 4 focuses on the importance of high-quality education, acknowledging the need to provide such education for all, but particularly for vulnerable populations such as impoverished children, children living in rural areas, people with disabilities, indigenous people, and children refugees. In order to fulfill this goal, education financing needs to be prioritized nationally. Other necessary actions include making education mandatory and free, hiring more teachers, improving basic school infrastructure, and embracing digital transformation (unicef.org, 2020)

In Asia, there are various obstacles in the way of implementing inclusive education. These difficulties include a lack of funding, poor training programs, inconsistent laws and policies pertaining to inclusive education, a lack of government support, a lack of appropriate curriculum development, a poorly organized classroom, inappropriate assessment procedures, a lack of awareness of inclusive education, and the requirement for ongoing stakeholder collaboration. A

teacher's degree of education, prior teaching experience, and involvement in pertinent professional development activities all play a role in how prepared they are for inclusive special education. The results revealed a number of important difficulties.

The significance of developing a thorough understanding between educators and parents, the difficulties in referring students to special education specialists, the effect of large class sizes on the efficacy of teachers, and the insufficiency of teacher preparation in meeting the needs of special education students were some of these issues. Teachers discussed several approaches to dealing with these problems. Seeking assistance from special education teachers, putting in place incentive and reinforcement systems, utilizing customized instruction, and making the most out of learning resources were some of these tactics (Zerrudo, 2022)

With the prevailing themes and concepts revealed, the researcher intends to explore the Kindergarten teachers' implementation of inclusive education in local culture specifically schools that are situated not in the hearts of the municipalities in the Division of Pangasinan but those which are considered distant.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study determined the extent of implementation of inclusive education among kindergarten teachers in the Division of San Carlos City.

Specifically, this study answered the following problems:

1. What is the profile of the Kindergarten Teachers in terms of:
  - a. age;
  - b. sex;
  - c. civil status;
  - d. highest educational attainment;
  - e. monthly family income;
  - f. position;
  - g. years in service;
  - h. number of memberships to professional organizations; and
  - i. number of relevant trainings attended?

2. What is the extent of implementation of inclusive education by the kindergarten teachers along the following dimensions:
  - a. philosophy
  - b. policies, and
  - c. practice?
3. Are there significant differences in the extent of implementation of inclusive education among kindergarten teachers across their profile variables?
4. Are there significant relationships between the extent of implementation of inclusive education and the profile variables of the kindergarten teachers?
5. What plan of action is proposed to enhance the implementation of the inclusive education based on the findings of the study?

### **Literature Review**

The revolutionary idea and practice of inclusive education embraces diversity and cultivates supportive school communities in order to provide all children, regardless of color, aptitude, or circumstance, with equal, high-quality learning experiences. In order to address the diverse needs of students, inclusive education encourages the creation of inclusive practices, policies, and cultures. It is based on legislation such as the 2013 Enhanced Basic Education Act and the joint efforts of educators, families, and communities. Even though implementation in the Philippines has advanced, there are still issues, such as a lack of funding, poor training for teachers, and a lack of community support. In order to create engaging, affirming, and caring learning environments, research emphasizes the necessity of systemic changes to enable accessibility, curriculum adaptation, teacher preparation, and active parental participation. In the end, inclusive education is advantageous to all students.

### **Inclusive Education: Its Nature and Concepts**

Inclusive education is a philosophy that promotes the acceptance of all children, regardless of their race, size, shape, color, ability, or disability. This strategy places a strong emphasis on the value of assistance from the community, parents, teachers, and students. All of these target groups—gifted and talented children, students with disabilities, students following the madrasa curriculum, indigenous peoples, and students facing challenging circumstances like geographic isolation, chronic illness, abuse, or displacement due to armed conflict, urban resettlement, or disaster—are included in the 2013 Enhanced Basic Education Act's provisions for inclusive education. The design, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs and services that address the various needs of every student are collaborative processes that involve the participation of educators, families, students, and community members. This approach is known as inclusive

education. Ensuring equitable access to education and inclusion in the school community is a crucial objective. For these reasons, inclusive education is very important. This philosophy's promotion of equitable access to education and creation of a safe, supportive environment for students to grow both intellectually and personally is one of its main advantages. Furthermore, the educational system gives students the tools they need to work together and communicate with people of different abilities, which better prepares them for situations they may encounter in the real world. In the end, this project breaks down the boundaries that divide those with disabilities from those without, promoting an environment of understanding and acceptance (Cabañero, 2023)

In like manner, according to Llego (2022), the Philippines has aggressively carried out a number of projects and activities to advance inclusive education. These guarantee that pupils get a top-notch education, are unbiased, accept diversity, and have a strong connection to their cultural heritage. However, it is crucial to recognize that some elements require more attention and improvement. Enough facilities and resources must be available in schools so that instructors can receive thorough training and be qualified to recognize and categorize all sorts of disability. Support from the government is essential for advancing inclusive education. Creating a more inclusive society requires increasing awareness of inclusive education. In order to execute inclusive education successfully, educators must have specific attributes. These attributes include tolerance, comprehension, adaptability, and open-mindedness. It is because putting inclusive education into practice calls for adaptations and concessions.

Alexaki, et al, (2022) mentioned that the three approaches are taken into consideration when discussing inclusive education include developing inclusive practices, inclusive policies, and inclusive cultures. The "ordinary" school works tirelessly to address the unique needs and circumstances of each student as well as foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding among its constituents. The particular objective is thought to be complicated and calls for a blend of applied educational approaches, educational policy, and school culture. The ideology of the school, or the set of values, beliefs, customs, and perspectives that the students have come to accept over time, is a part of the school culture. It has an impact on how the school runs and puts inclusive policies into action.

It is also believed that all students ought to have access to the resources they require for their education in order for inclusive education to be accessible. Accessibility concerns are universal and impact all students, even though it is frequently linked to granting access for individuals with disabilities. When creating a course that is inclusive of all students, take accessibility into account on a broad scale. Numerous factors contribute to accessibility, such as: cost-effectiveness and the cost of course materials; temporal access for students juggling multiple priorities or in different time zones; access to multiple modalities regarding materials, activities, and learning assessments; access to technology tools, dependable connections, and consideration of international restrictions on technology use (teachingcommons, 2023)

## Implementation of the Inclusive Education

Cayabyab (2023) noted in his paper, "*Implementation of Inclusive Education: A Region-wide Study in the Philippines*," that evaluating the current state of IE implementation is necessary to enhance its implementation in the country. Through the use of a validated survey questionnaire, faculty members from four (4) state universities and colleges in Region I, the Philippines, were asked to rate the implementation of IE. The results showed that inclusive education was "moderately implemented" overall. Furthermore, out of the three areas evaluated, academic policies and physical plant and facilities were classified as having moderate implementation, however teachers' preparation and competence received a high implementation rating.

However, Llanos et al.'s (2024) study looked at inclusive education in Philippine primary schools with a particular emphasis on curriculum adaptation, teacher development, policy frameworks, and community and parent involvement. A thorough analysis of the body of research and empirical data reveals a number of important insights. Legislative frameworks encourage inclusive education, but because of ambiguities and resource limitations, it is nevertheless difficult to put regulations into effect. Professional development and teacher preparation are recognized as crucial components, with inadequate preparation of teachers impeding successful implementation. Adapting curricula and differentiating instruction present additional difficulties in meeting the demands of a varied student body. In addition, parental and community involvement is essential for creating inclusive school environments, but there are major obstacles to overcome, including resource limitations and attitude barriers. In order to successfully implement inclusive practices and solve these issues, collaborative efforts are crucial. This will ultimately result in the creation of environments that meet the unique needs of all students.

Additionally, it should be noted that inclusive education benefits all students, not just those with disabilities. It fosters a positive learning environment that values diversity and encourages collaboration and teamwork. Additionally, it helps students develop empathy and understanding, which can lead to more accepting and inclusive communities. The principles of inclusive education, as revealed by princetonreview (2023), are as follows: equality and diversity emphasizes that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, should have equal access to education and be treated with respect and dignity; collaboration and partnership encourages educators, parents, and students to work together to create an inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of all learners; access and participation are essential concepts of inclusive education. It seeks to provide equal educational opportunities to all pupils and to promote their active participation in the classroom. Autonomy and empowerment are other crucial inclusive education tenets. It implies that educators should enable students to make decisions about their education and should support them in taking ownership of their learning.

The study by Raguindin et al. (2021) made clear that there may be differences in how the principles of inclusive education are applied in various nations due to differences in interpretations, settings, and implementation methods. This build a framework for comprehending inclusive

ecosystems that thrive in an inclusive Philippine setting using a grounded theory approach. Three key dimensions—an engaging environment, an affirming environment, and a nurturing environment—were captured by the developing theory to help comprehend concepts of an inclusive environment. High standards for learning outcomes, fostering cooperation and communication between students, instructors, and parents, and including them in decision-making are all indicators of an engaging environment. Conversely, practicing expressive and receptive language, internalizing the intrinsic value of each student, and embracing variety are all indicative of an affirming atmosphere. Ultimately, interdependence and attending to everyone's needs can create a loving environment. These dimensions are not independent; they are connected.

According to the Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological study of Dela Fuente (2021), inclusive education seeks to provide special needs children with a quality education that maximizes their potential for holistic development by mainstreaming them into a flexible learning environment. This objective is dependent on educators, who may create an inclusive learning environment by forming good morals, imparting information, and helping outstanding students acquire the skills they need to overcome obstacles in life. Topics are presented as opportunities to design a better future for deaf students, to engage in exciting teaching, and to challenge them to use their creative and inventive brains to develop teaching tools for successful, high-quality education. The qualities that were emphasized could open the door to more successful inclusive education in the Philippines.

Also, according to the meta-synthesis of articles conducted by Alcosero et al. (2023), regular instructors' readiness is crucial for executing inclusive education in the Philippines. He claimed that regular teachers are ill-prepared to teach inclusive education because they lack the resources, expertise, and understanding required to teaching students with disabilities. He suggested giving regular teachers practical training and access to programs that offer them professional and psychological support in order to successfully integrate and carry out the educational activities of students with special needs in a regular classroom setting.

### **Challenges in the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

On the same note, Shih (2022) looked at the challenges the preschool's instructors faced when creating and implementing the local culture curriculum, as well as how they combined the preschool's vision, educational objectives, and community resources. Subsequently, the researcher created solutions for these kinds of issues. The ability of the local culture curriculum to spark children's interest in history and the humanities through the lens of their experiences, as well as its integration of local culture and the community— particularly through interactions between young children and adults—were found to be the curriculum's most crucial components. The following procedures were involved in putting the local culture curriculum into practice: setting up a thematic network; organizing the activities, which included looking into the children's past experiences and modifying the curriculum and teaching strategies accordingly; carrying out the activities, which

included going to the market and helping out; assessing the activities; making thank-you cards and coming up with ideas for store remodeling.

Equally, the work by Akbar et al. (2023) is innovative since it provides a thorough investigation of inclusive education practices and sheds light on the institutional, social, and pedagogical elements that go into establishing an inclusive learning environment. It covered how to promote diversity through curriculum adaption, teacher preparation, and assistive technology use. Provided information on how inclusive education strategies may be implemented successfully and how diverse learners can benefit from them. Through the provision of evidence-based guidelines for developing inclusive learning environments that support each student's holistic development, it is hoped to assist educators, policymakers, and practitioners.

The difficulties, however, of implementing inclusive education at Star Kindergarten, a private kindergarten in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, were examined in the Pasingasih (2024) case study. The results showed that views toward inclusive education are favorable among both teachers and students. Despite the fact that Star Kindergarten serves students from upper-middle-class socioeconomic situations, three obstacles could prevent inclusive education from being implemented there. These difficulties include the teachers' lack of experience from their lack of early childhood education programs, the school's inadequate training, and the parents' scant support. Collaboration between parents and schools as well as professional development for educators are required to facilitate the implementation of inclusive education in kindergarten.

Similarly, from the perspective of teachers and parents, Qatawneh, et al. (2022) outlined the challenges facing inclusive education in inclusive kindergartens. They demonstrated the moderate degree to which teachers saw impediments to inclusive learning. The parents' perspective on the challenges they faced in integrating their children's education also reached a medium level on average, and they advised families of children with disabilities to encourage their children to attend inclusive schools. Additionally, it called on the authorities in charge of kindergartens to show more interest in these establishments by closely monitoring and supervising the caliber of the rehabilitative services offered and the different environmental tools.

There are still disagreements, nevertheless, about how best to support children with impairments in their play and what the teacher should be doing when letting them play. This present multiple case research examined the viewpoints and methods of three kindergarten teachers, known as actors, who greatly valued and worked to facilitate inclusion and involvement in play-based learning. The necessity of fostering social relationships in play, the need to balance student autonomy and teacher leadership, and flexible, child-centered involvement are some of the recurring themes that actors discussed when it came to integrating play-based learning to promote inclusion. These perspectives shaped both typical and unusual play behaviors, such as one-on-one interactions, helping small groups, participating actively in play, and working together to solve play-related issues (Danniels, 2022)

Although the nation is moving in the right direction toward inclusive education, more has to be done. The Philippines needs to do the following before inclusive education can become a reality: first, all schools need to be furnished with the necessary resources to serve children with disabilities. For students who use wheelchairs, this entails providing ramps and elevators; for those who are blind or have low vision, Braille textbooks; and for those who are deaf or hard of hearing, sign language interpreters. Secondly, in order to instruct kids with disabilities, all teachers need to be adequately trained. Everything from behavior management to accommodations and adaptations should be covered in this training. Teaching staff members how to work with kids who have impairments is one method to promote inclusivity in the classroom. Instructors must recognize the many kinds of disabilities, comprehend what they can do, and know how to support their learning. Ensuring that there are adequate resources, such as specialized tools or materials that students with disabilities require in order to learn, is another aspect of inclusive education. (Villegas, et al, 2023).

## **II. Methodology**

### **Research Design and Strategy**

This study applied an ex post facto One-Shot Case Study Design. According to Tippins (2023), ex post facto One-Shot Case Study Design is a non-experimental design that starts after an event has already occurred, without the investigator's interference. This approach is widely used in social research because it allows for the investigation of relationships and effects in a real-world context where manipulation of variables is not feasible. Ex post facto One-Shot Case Study Design is particularly relevant here, as it enables the examination of existing teaching practices and cultural integration efforts retrospectively. By analyzing data from current teaching practices, researchers can identify patterns, relationships, and potential causal links between cultural integration and inclusivity in education, all while respecting the natural classroom setting.

### **Population and Locale of the Study**

The respondents for this study were the kindergarten teachers among public elementary schools in the Division of San Carlos City. The number of respondents per school was determined through complete enumeration. A total number of eighty-six kindergarten teachers from all elementary schools situated in San Carlos City was considered as the respondents of the study.

### **Data Gathering Tools**

This study made use of a researcher-made survey questionnaire which was patterned from related literature and studies of the study. The researcher formulated the instrument through intensive consultation with experts with the supervision of the adviser. The questionnaire composed of the profile of the teachers and the 5-point Likert scale on the implementation of inclusive education by the Kindergarten Teachers.

The statements for the Likert scale on the implementation level of inclusive education was based on *DO 72, s. 2009 on Inclusive Education as Strategy for Increasing Participation Rate of Children and DepEd Order No. 21, titled Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program* that included a policy framework on inclusive education as well as the *Republic Act No. 11650 (An Act Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education, Establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers of Learners with Disabilities in All Schools Districts, Municipalities and Cities, Providing for Standards, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes)*.

Prior to the actual data gathering process, the researcher sought the help of five (5) experts in the field of research and early childhood education to validate the questionnaire through a rubric that was provided. The results then processed and compared to the standard prescribed by the rubric whether the instrument was reliable and valid or needs revision.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

To facilitate the data gathering procedure, the researcher first secured the necessary permits and letters from the Schools Division Office. After securing the necessary papers needed for the approval of the conduct of the study, the researcher asked a permission from each of the school heads or principals to distribute the research questionnaire to the Kindergarten teachers. The responses of the respondents were collated for processing and interpretation.

## **III. Results and Discussion**

The salient findings in this study includes the following: Most of the respondent-KTs belong to the 26-35 year old age bracket, females, married, and master's degree holder with units leading to a /doctor's degree. Typically, majority of the respondents have a monthly family income of 21,194.00 to 43,828.00 Php, have 4-6 years in service, 1-3 relevant in-service trainings, 4 or more memberships in professional organizations.

The grand overall weighted mean (GOWM) of the extent of implementation of the IE by the respondent-KTs is 1.41, equivalent to "never" (N) in descriptive rating, and "not extensive" in transmuted rating. All the areas of implementation, namely: "philosophy," "policies," and "practices" obtained WMs equivalent to "not extensive" (NE).

Significant mean differences in the extent of implementation of the IE by the respondent-KTs are found with respect to the variables, 1) age, 2) highest educational attainment, 3) position, 4) monthly family income, and 5) years in service.

Significant correlations are indicated in the extent of implementation of the IE and certain variables, namely: 1) age, 2) monthly family income, 3) years in service, and 4) number of memberships in professional organizations.

#### IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The respondent-KTs are typically mature females, who belongs to the middle middle class families, and have a master's degree, are very much qualified as kindergarten teachers. Their implementation of the IE which is generally "not extensive" is in great need of improvement to level up their involvement in the implementation of this important program of the DepEd. The profile variables (independent variables) used in this study are capable of differentiating the extent of implementation of IE by Kindergarten teachers. Thus, these should be used in future studies on IE. The dependent variable, which is the "extent of implementation of IE by the respondent-KTs" are associated with these variables.

It is, however, recommended that since many of the respondent-KTs are not yet Master degree graduates, it is strongly recommended that scholarship grants be instituted and implemented to encourage kindergarten teachers to pursue advanced academic degrees in accredited institution. Further studies on the implementation of the IE should include more independent variable (profile variables) beside those that were used in this study. Furthermore, future studies on the implementation of the IE in other grade levels in the revised DepEd curriculum should be conducted under the auspices of accredited graduate institutions. Specialized support and professional development programs may be created to address the particular needs and circumstances of teachers based on age, monthly family income, years of service, and the number of professional organization memberships because these factors are linked to the implementation of inclusive education.

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