

Perception And Efficacy Of Special Education Teacher Towards Inclusive Education

KATE JOEFEL B. ONG

University of Perpetual Help System-DALTA
Las Piñas City, Philippines

DR. BENJAMIN C. SIY JR.

ORCID # 0009-0007-0017-3648
University of Perpetual Help System-DALTA
Las Piñas City, Philippines

Abstract — Inclusive education has become a major priority in educational systems worldwide as it promotes equal opportunities, participation, and acceptance of learners with diverse needs in regular classroom settings. This study aimed to determine the level of perception and efficacy of special education (SPED) teachers in Cagayan de Oro City toward inclusive education. Specifically, it examined teachers' perceptions and efficacy in terms of curriculum, accommodation, learning environment, modification, instructional materials, and managing behavior. It also investigated whether significant differences exist in perception and efficacy when teachers are grouped according to their profile, and whether a significant difference exists between perception and efficacy toward inclusive education.

A descriptive research design was employed using a researcher-made questionnaire administered to selected SPED teachers from public and private schools in Cagayan de Oro City. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage, weighted mean, t-test, ANOVA, and paired t-test at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results revealed that SPED teachers demonstrated a high level of perception and a moderate to high level of efficacy toward inclusive education across all six areas. Furthermore, there were no significant differences in perception and efficacy when teachers were grouped according to age, years of teaching experience, and type of school. Likewise, results indicated no significant difference between teachers' level of perception and level of efficacy, suggesting that teachers' positive attitudes align with their confidence in implementing inclusive practices. These

findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing the role of teacher beliefs and self-efficacy in successful inclusive education implementation (Tümkeya & Miller, 2023; Fairbrother et al., 2025).

The study concludes that SPED teachers in Cagayan de Oro City generally support and feel capable of implementing inclusive education practices. The outcomes have implications for professional development, teacher education, and policy enhancement to further strengthen inclusive education programs.

Keywords: inclusive education, perception, self-efficacy, special education teachers, Cagayan de Oro City

I. INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, several schools had adopted full inclusion classroom settings where students with and without needs were educated together, and this practice had been increasing worldwide. As mentioned in one study, inclusive education had started its mainstream in global education policy since the Salamanca Statement on Principles, which highlighted the philosophies of “Education for All,” in which this statement concluded that regular schools with an inclusive orientation were the best option for diminishing negative attitudes and creating open-minded communities (Ainscow et al., 2019). Accordingly, in the Philippines, the 2009 Department of Education Order No. 72 had been implemented to address the problem of educational opportunities and guarantee the right of students with special needs to receive appropriate education in inclusive classroom settings. This order had mandated that regular schools, with or without trained special education teachers, provide educational services to students with special needs. Additionally, this had been supported by another Department of Education Order No. 43, s. 2013, known as the Enhanced Basic Education Program. This order had promoted the principle of inclusion regarding the recognition of the diversity of the country’s learners, schools, and communities.

However, despite these implemented policies, it had still been reported in the Sub-Education Policy Review Report, Inclusive Education of UNESCO, that the Philippines had established a policy on the implementation of inclusive education, yet several problems had still been encountered that were linked to inclusive education, particularly regarding its quality. For this reason, the inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms had brought greater attention to how prepared special education teachers were for teaching students with needs in an inclusive setting. As explained in a previous study, inclusive education depended on the environment of students with special needs, which included the teachers assigned to the program (Rosales & Rosales, 2019).

Thus, it had been significant to take an in-depth look at teachers' perspectives and efficacy towards inclusive education since previous research had revealed that one of the important factors in determining the success of inclusive education was considering teachers' outlooks toward the program, as they were the frontliners in the educational system and program implementation (Siason et al., 2022). The implementation of inclusive education had been fundamentally woven into the complex fabric of teaching and learning. In this teaching and learning process, teachers had played an essential role. Accordingly, in an inclusive classroom, both general education and special education teachers had significant responsibilities in the program, since the general education teacher delivered the curriculum used by the school while the special education teacher provided and ensured that students with special needs received a good quality of education, making sure that their individual needs were met. Moreover, it had been believed that combining the knowledge and skills of both general and special education teachers would be helpful for the effective implementation of the program.

With this, the researcher believed that it was important to consider the perception and efficacy of teachers towards inclusive education, since they had been placed in a position where they were expected to provide the best quality of education to students with special needs. According to one study, many experts had suggested that the success of inclusive education largely depended on the quality of teachers and their beliefs and attitudes towards the program (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Therefore, this current trend in the field of education had caught the attention of the researcher, since several studies globally had shown that teachers often manifested a negative point

of view towards inclusive education. Thus, this study aimed to understand teachers' perspectives to gain information about the region's emerging inclusive education program.

Inclusive education gave students with special needs the opportunity to learn alongside typically developing students in the regular classroom. Many countries around the globe had been slowly adapting inclusion into their educational practices. However, despite the years since inclusion had been introduced into the educational system, some studies still suggested the need to further advance inclusive education, and one way to achieve this was to ensure that teachers were prepared to implement the inclusive program (Kurth, J., Zagona, A., & Macfarland, S. Z., 2017).

As one study from Cagayan de Oro reported, there were 87 in-service teachers who were willing to teach in an inclusive classroom. However, the overall response indicated that they were not ready to face the challenges of managing students with special needs (Ecoben, M. E., 2019). Hence, the researcher believed in the importance of investigating teachers' perceptions and efficacy to understand and be aware of their insights and self-efficacy towards inclusive education, since this could have a ripple effect on other domains in providing the best quality of education.

Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the perceptions and efficacy of special education teachers from Cagayan de Oro who taught in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, the study intended to provide insights and a better understanding of teachers' perspectives to further improve the inclusive education program.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). This theory provided a framework for analyzing how teachers learned to teach and became effective in the implemented educational programs. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory viewed human behavior as a result of choices made based on cognitively processed information about the self and the environment. It suggested that a person both shaped and was shaped by their actions and environment. This mutual influence was referred to as triadic reciprocity – learning, enactive learning, and behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Accordingly, self-efficacy was related to one's self-judgment of competencies used under different conditions. There were two types of self-efficacy: Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE), which referred to the teacher's belief that they possessed the skills and abilities to facilitate students' learning, and General Teaching Efficacy, which referred to the belief that teaching could positively affect pupils even in the presence of external factors such as low motivation or a poor home environment. Hence, Bandura suggested that one's perception of self-efficacy was a key factor in determining whether a person would engage in a certain behavior; stronger efficacy led to greater effort to master challenges.

Basically, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provided a concept to understand how people actively shaped and were shaped by their environment through their actions, experiences, and interactions. observational learning, modeling, and the influence of self-efficacy on the production of behavior. Thus, this concept was used to determine the perception and efficacy of special education teachers in inclusive education considering on what they had acquired and observed from their respective environment about the program.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized the Input-Output-Process (IPO). The study showed the causal relationship of the Input, Process, and Output.

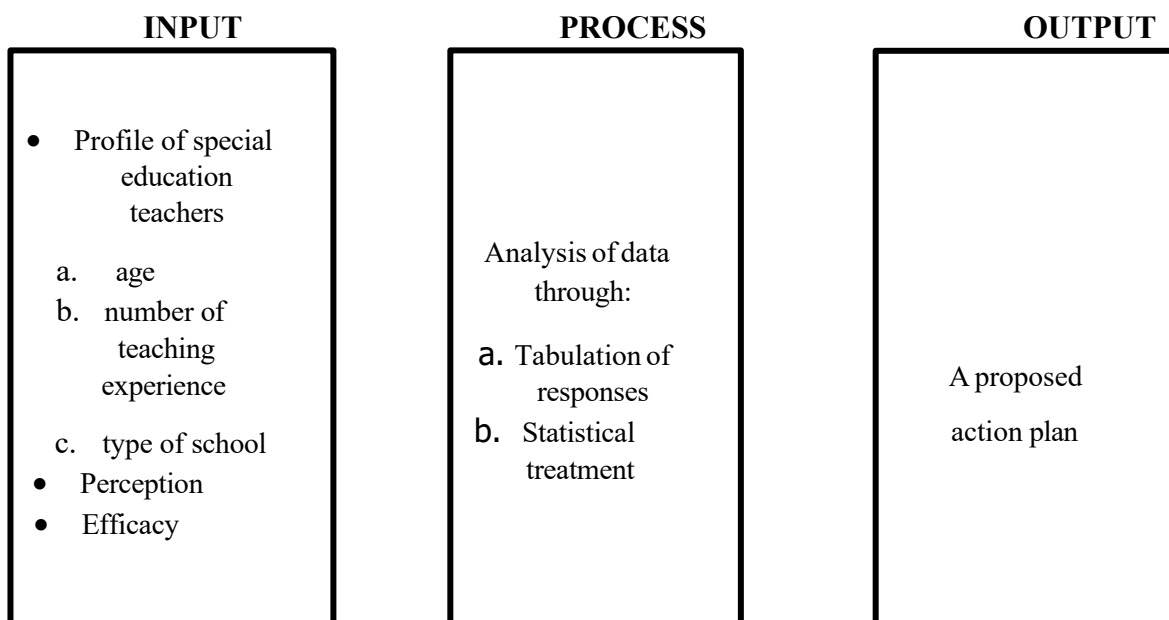


FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Figure 1 shows the conceptual Framework of the study. In respect to this study, the city of Cagayan de Oro had been implementing inclusive education to some public and private sectors. This meant that several teachers had been teaching students with special needs in regular classrooms. Accordingly, figure 1 showed the conceptual framework of the study, which illustrates the input, process, and output. The input is the independent variable, which includes the profile, perception and efficacy of the special education teachers. The process included the instruments and analysis of the data that were gathered, while the output represented the results of the study.

Statement of the Problem

One of the educational trends that had been receiving increasing attention was meeting the needs of students with special needs in the regular classroom. As stated in a review report on inclusive education by UNESCO, teachers were not fully prepared for the challenges of handling students with special needs in their classrooms, which contributed to issues in the quality of education. With this, the researcher investigated the perceptions and efficacy of special education

teachers towards inclusive education in Cagayan de Oro City and obtained all essential knowledge, data, and information. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the sped teachers, as to:
 - a. Age,
 - b. Years of teaching experience,
 - c. Type of school?
2. What is the perception of special education teachers regarding inclusive education. As to:
 - a. curriculum,
 - b. learning environment,
 - c. instructional materials,
 - d. accommodation,
 - e. modification,
 - f. managing behavior?
3. What is the efficacy of special education teachers towards inclusive education, as to:
 - a. curriculum,
 - b. learning environment,
 - c. instructional materials,
 - d. accommodation,
 - e. modification,
 - f. managing behavior?

4. Is there a significant Difference in the Level of Perception of Special Education Teachers on Inclusive Education when grouped according to Profile?
5. Is there a significant difference in the Perceived Level of Efficacy of Special Education Teachers towards Inclusive Education when grouped according to Profile?
6. Is there a significant difference between the level perception and level self- efficacy of special education teachers towards inclusive education?
7. What can be proposed based on the research findings?

II. METHODOLOGY

The research method used in the study was quantitative research. This approach dealt with quantifying and analysis to conclude the results of the gathered information. As mentioned in the book of Patrick Ngulube, this type of method used numerical data utilizing appropriate statistical techniques to answer questions like who, how much, what, where, when, how many and how (Ngulube, 2021). In addition, quantitative type of research was conducted in a structured environment which mostly allows the researcher to have control over the variables, environment, and questions. It utilized standardized questionnaires to collect numerical data (Rutberg & Bouikidis, 2018). This type of research method intended to emphasize accurate analysis through gathering and evaluating measurable data and (Chen et al., 2023).

A descriptive design was selected for the study. It was based on existing data without having an end goal in concluding generally (Wahyudi, 2018). In an article from Voxco (2019), it explained that this type of design helped in answering the what, when where and how research question rather than on the why. Also, the variables in this descriptive design were solely identified, observed, and measured. The most commonly used means of this design were survey and observation which provided an advantage of being able to use online or offline survey tools (Descriptive Research Design, 2019). Furthermore, the quantitative descriptive design was chosen by the researcher since its principles fit in answering the problem and purpose of the study.

Data Generation and Selection of Co-participants

The study was conducted in selected private and public schools implementing inclusive education in Cagayan de Oro City, which was chosen due to its recent qualification as a metro city and its growing educational system. A total of seven schools (four private and three public) were involved. The respondents consisted of 30 teachers handling inclusive classrooms. They were required to be education graduates or unit earners, regular teachers, and have at least two years of experience in inclusive teaching.

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire divided into three sections: (A) demographic profile, (B) teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, and (C) teachers' self-efficacy. The questionnaire used a Likert scale and ensured anonymity for respondents. It was validated by three education experts prior to use. The data gathering process followed five steps: securing approval from the graduate school, validating the questionnaire, obtaining permission from school authorities, requesting participation from respondents, and collecting data through Google Forms or hard copies.

Finally, the collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to interpret results, draw conclusions, and provide recommendations for improving inclusive education implementation.

Data Analysis

The study collected data quantitatively through a researcher made questionnaire using the Likert Scale. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was gathering on the demographic profile of the respondents. While the second and third part contained statements regarding the teacher's perspective and efficacy to a specific aspect in inclusive education such as curriculum, instruction materials, learning environment, etc. The respondents expressed their thoughts through responding from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

The 4-point scale, its mean range and verbal interpretation.

Point	Range	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.26-4.0	Strongly agree
3	2.51-3.25	Agree
2	1.76-2.50	Disagree
1	1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree

Literature Comparison

Inclusive education had increasingly become a global educational priority, advocating for the rights of all students, regardless of abilities, to access quality education in mainstream classrooms (UNESCO, 2018; Al-Shammari et al., 2019). Its implementation, however, extended beyond policy frameworks and required active engagement at the classroom level, where teachers served as the primary agents of change (Cate et al., 2018). Studies revealed that while many countries had established inclusive policies, actual classroom practices often lagged behind, highlighting the critical role of teachers in translating policy into effective practice (Haug, 2017). Teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion were central to the success of inclusive education. Perception was a complex cognitive process involving selection, organization, and interpretation of environmental stimuli, shaping teachers' decisions and actions in the classroom (Hamilton et al., 2018).

Research indicated that teachers with prior training, extensive experience, and higher education levels tended to exhibit more positive attitudes toward inclusion, whereas younger and less experienced teachers with limited exposure to special education often demonstrated lower enthusiasm and confidence (Mngo & Mngo, 2018; Paguirigan, 2020). These findings underscored the importance of understanding teacher perceptions, as they influenced motivation, instructional strategies, and the overall effectiveness of inclusion programs.

Closely linked to perception was teacher self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to successfully execute actions required to achieve desired outcomes (Gangloff & Mazilescu, 2017). Teachers with high self-efficacy exhibited stronger resilience, motivation, and commitment to inclusive practices, positively affecting student engagement and achievement (Flammer, 2018; Miesera et al., 2019; Yada & Alnahdi, 2021). Conversely, low self-efficacy impeded the implementation of inclusive practices and contributed to teacher stress and burnout. Recent research emphasized that professional development, mentoring, and reflective practice enhanced teacher self-efficacy and, by extension, improved the quality of inclusion in classrooms (Atillo Lahug et al., 2025; Selisko et al., 2024). (Zagona et al., 2019)

Curriculum design played a pivotal role in fostering inclusive education. Inclusive curricula prioritized flexibility, differentiation, and responsiveness to student diversity rather than rigid, standardized approaches (Bunbury, 2018; Imaniah & Fitria, 2018). Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles guided the creation of curricula that accommodated diverse learning needs while maintaining high academic standards (Schuelka, 2018b; Zwane & Malale, 2018). However, educators often faced challenges in modifying or developing curricula due to insufficient guidelines, lack of resources, and increased workload (Ilyas et al., 2022), emphasizing the need for teacher involvement in curriculum planning.

Effective inclusive practice relied on the teacher's ability to translate policies and curricula into meaningful classroom actions. Teachers' knowledge, self-efficacy, and perceptions directly influenced the fidelity of inclusive practices, such as differentiated instruction, adaptive teaching strategies, and classroom accommodations (Yada et al., 2021). Similarly, learning environments that were flexible, supportive, and responsive to diverse needs facilitated students' sense of belonging and engagement, which were critical for academic and social development (Nugroho et al., 2020; Dewsbury & Brame, 2019; Dela Fuente, 2021).

Instructional materials, accommodations, and modifications were also essential components of inclusive education. Adequate and appropriate teaching materials supported differentiated learning,

While accommodations and modifications allowed students with special needs to access the curriculum equitably (Kabwos et al., 2020; Leifler et al., 2021; Tongsookdee, 2019). Accommodations involved adjustments to format, timing, or presentation, whereas modifications entailed changes to learning standards or expectations (Fitri, 2022; Hsiao et al., 2018). The effective use of these strategies ensured that students with disabilities could participate meaningfully in classroom activities and achieve individualized learning goals.

Lastly, managing behavior remained a significant challenge in inclusive classrooms. Teachers' ability to manage challenging behavior was closely tied to their self-efficacy, confidence, and preparation (Armstrong, 2018; Anglim et al., 2018; Monteiro et al., 2019). Teachers with higher self-efficacy were better equipped to implement strategies that supported students' social and academic development, whereas low self-efficacy led to ineffective behavior management and negative student outcomes (Yada et al., 2018).

In synthesis, the literature highlighted the interconnectedness of teacher perception, self-efficacy, curriculum, resources, instructional strategies, and classroom management in the successful implementation of inclusive education. While policy frameworks and national mandates provided the foundation, the classroom-level success of inclusion ultimately depended on teachers, their beliefs, competencies, and ability to adapt environments, instruction, and materials to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

This synthesis underscored the importance of supporting teachers through professional development, resources, and collaborative practices to achieve equitable and meaningful learning for every student

Ethical Consideration

The researcher observed ethical standards throughout the study. Permission to conduct the research was secured from the Dean and school principals before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents by explaining the purpose of the study and ensuring that participation was voluntary. The identities of the participants were kept anonymous, and all information gathered was treated with strict confidentiality and used only for academic purposes.

Respondents were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The researcher ensured that no harm was caused to participants and that all data were honestly recorded, analyzed, and reported. Proper citation of sources was also observed to maintain academic integrity.

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Based on the data gathered and analyzed, the researcher has found out that:

1. Majority of the respondents were young, belonging to the 20–29 age group.

Many of the respondents had less than six years of teaching experience, showing a relatively new workforce in the SPED field and respondents were equally represented from public and private schools.

2. Respondents moderately perceived inclusive education. Among the dimensions, accommodation and learning environment were rated highest, while instructional materials and curriculum showed moderate perceptions. Moreover, teachers also recognized the importance of behavior management and modification, but these areas require stronger support and training.

3. As to Efficacy of SPED Teachers on Inclusive Education, teachers reported a moderate level of self-efficacy in handling inclusive education. They expressed greater confidence in adapting accommodation and creating a supportive learning environment, while they felt less efficacious in designing curriculum adaptations and sourcing instructional materials.

4. Results revealed no significant difference in teachers' perceptions when grouped according to age, years of teaching experience, and type of school. This suggests that perceptions of inclusion are relatively consistent across demographic groups.

5. There was no significant difference in teachers reported self-efficacy levels when grouped according to their demographic profile. This indicates that experience, age, or type of school does not strongly influence teachers' confidence in inclusive education practices.
6. Findings indicated a positive but not strongly significant relationship between teachers' perceptions and self-efficacy levels. This implies that while perceptions influence confidence to some extent, other factors such as training, resources, institutional support also affect teachers' efficacy in inclusive education.
7. Based on the findings, the researcher proposed a Teacher Development Program is recommended, focusing on capacity building in inclusive education practices, improvement of instructional resources, and stronger collaboration among stakeholders to enhance inclusive education in Cagayan de Oro City.

Conclusions

Based on the synthesis of the findings and their discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. SPED teachers in Cagayan de Oro City are relatively young and early in their teaching careers, which presents opportunities for professional growth but also highlights the need for sustained training.
2. Teachers generally hold positive perceptions toward inclusive education, particularly in accommodation and learning environment, showing willingness to adapt to learner diversity.
3. Teachers' self-efficacy is moderately developed, with confidence strongest in classroom accommodations but weaker in curriculum design and instructional material provision.
4. Demographic factors such as age, experience, and type of school do not significantly affect teachers' perceptions or self-efficacy toward inclusion, suggesting a shared outlook across groups.
5. Perceptions and self-efficacy are related, but the relationship is not strong enough to assume that positive perceptions automatically translate into high efficacy.

6. Inclusive education in Cagayan de Oro requires a more systematic support framework, including training, resources, and consistent policy implementation.

7. A structured professional development program, paired with resource allocation and stakeholder collaboration, is essential to strengthen inclusive education practices in both public and private schools.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Professional development should be utilized through sustained training focused on differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, and classroom behavior management. When these initiatives are contextually responsive, they provide teachers with practical, evidence-based strategies that can be effectively integrated into their daily instructional practice.
2. Curriculum enhancement is also essential to ensure alignment with inclusive education principles. Regular review and adaptation of learning objectives and instructional approaches help maintain responsiveness to the diverse needs of learners.
3. Adequate instructional resources must be made available to support inclusive practices effectively. Schools should allocate sufficient funds to provide special education teachers with accessible and adaptive learning materials that facilitate varied learning experiences.
4. Reinforcing support systems can be achieved through a teacher buddy approach, combined with collaboration with specialists, ensuring that teachers receive guidance in meeting the diverse needs of students.
5. Collaboration among schools is recommended to foster mentoring, resource- sharing, and joint capacity-building initiatives.
6. Future studies may examine the long-term outcomes of inclusive education, while teachers are encouraged to pursue advanced training or graduate studies in special education to deepen their

expertise and enhance inclusive practices. In addition, teachers should engage with emerging trends in the field

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