

READINESS AND EFFICACY OF TEACHERS IN HANDLING LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the relationships between readiness and efficacy of teachers in handling learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs). The design used is descriptive-correlational method approach. Study population was comprised of thirty (30) receiving elementary teachers in selected school at the first district of Division of Davao Oriental. The instruments used was adopted from the study of Dioso et.al (2022) and Kazanopoulos et.al (2022). The finding reveals that there is a high level of readiness among teachers in handling learners with special needs. This readiness is crucial to ensure the effective education and inclusion of students with diverse learning requirements. The data also demonstrates a high level of efficacy among teachers in handling LSENs. Effective collaboration with parents and professionals, managing disruptive behaviors, and implementing inclusive instruction methods are vital for providing a supportive and inclusive educational environment. The results of this study provide evidence that the strong positive correlation between teachers' readiness and efficacy underscores the importance of adequately preparing and supporting teachers in handling LSENs. Policymakers should consider these findings when shaping policies related to teacher training, educational reforms, and resource allocation to ensure that teachers receive adequate support and training to effectively handle learners with special needs.

Keywords: Learners With Special Educational Needs (Lsens), Inclusive Education, Readiness, Efficacy.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the current educational setting, inclusion of diverse learners is one the pillars of progressive education. Teachers play a vital role in creating an environment that fosters the holistic development of all learners. However, one significant challenge that teachers face is providing an effective instruction for learners with special educational needs (LSENs). The readiness and efficacy of teachers in addressing the unique needs of these learners have never been more critical. In the Philippines, the effective implementation of inclusive education depends heavily on the competence and readiness of teachers.

The study conducted by Dioso, Iglesia, and Ramiro (2022) disclosed that in terms of classroom instruction, assessment of students' performance, and evaluating and monitoring students' progress the respondents reported to be 'highly ready'. However, in terms of curricular content, the respondents disclosed to be only 'moderately ready'. Additionally, according to study conducted by Benjamin Adu Gyamfi, and Abraham Yeboah in the Adansi North District Ghana, teachers' perceptions of educating learners with special needs as a highly personalized and specialized process recommended that normal education teachers should be familiar with diverse approaches for handling individuals with special needs in inclusive classrooms.

In a study conducted by Gavish, Bar-On, et al. (2016), where they examined Israelis' perceived self-efficacy stated that demanding work of a special education teacher such as providing educational services to students with or without special needs, guide general education teachers in developing activities and take part in the regular teaching tasks, effective handling of these multitude duties requires a strong sense of self-efficacy. The results have indicated a high percentage of respondents with strongly perceived self-efficacy. Teachers tend to have a high or strong perceived self-efficacy based on their high control over their ability to cooperate with faculty members and parents, as well as in the planning and carrying out of complex teaching process in a variety of situations necessitating teachers to possess a wide range of skills and innovative knowledge.

As a solution to this problem, regular education teachers in the Adansi North District adapted instructional strategies to meet the needs of learners with special needs in inclusive classrooms by pre-teaching difficult vocabulary and concepts before the start of the lesson, accepting alternate forms of sharing information, and

taking into account individual learners' abilities in the delivery of their lessons, ensuring that all learners benefit from the teaching and learning process. However, it was concluded that regular education teachers faced significant challenges in handling individuals with special needs, such as teachers feeling inadequate in dealing with learners with special educational needs and teachers struggling with the tension between accommodating the special needs of some learners while negatively impacting other learners Baron, et.al (2016)

For this reason, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between the readiness and efficacy of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs. This study delves into the multifaceted landscape of teachers' readiness and efficacy in handling learners with learning disabilities, acknowledging the pressing need to enhance the quality of education and inclusivity in the Philippines. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of inclusive education, the current response to the challenge of educating learners with learning disabilities in the Philippines remains diverse and uneven. While some educators have received specialized training and support, others struggle due to limited resources and awareness. Consequently, a thorough investigation into the readiness and efficacy of teachers is warranted to inform policy changes and professional development initiatives.

Finally, special education teachers and education authorities will benefit from this study because of the valuable information about the readiness and efficacy of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs will provide ideas that can help improve the educational system specifically when it comes to inclusive education which was implemented to cater the needs of learners with special educational needs. The results will represent a great source of information about the community involved in the educational field which will contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning process especially in handling learners with special educational needs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Readiness of teacher in handling learners with Special Educational Needs

According to Pershina, Pershina and Luzhbina (2018) Teachers' readiness to work in conditions of inclusive education is considered by authors through two main indicators: professional readiness and psychological readiness. Professional preparedness is based on information readiness, possession of pedagogical technologies, knowledge of the basics of psychology and correctional pedagogy, knowledge of individual differences in children, readiness of teachers to simulate a lesson and use variability in the learning process, knowledge of individual characteristics of children with various disabilities in development, and readiness for professional interaction and training. Psychological readiness involves the emotional acceptance of children with various types of developmental disorders, readiness to include children with different types of violations in lesson activities, and satisfaction with own pedagogical activity.

A study conducted by Dioso, Iglesia and Ramiro (2022) concluded that teachers' readiness for inclusive special education was established with the provided Inservice training for professional development. However, further trainings in handling students with special needs in an inclusive setting should be given emphasis. Additional special education support, opportunities, and resources are needed to increase the level of teachers' readiness for inclusive special education. The Department of Education may continue to act in the full implementation of inclusive special education in all schools with SPED Center implement full action in the call for inclusive special education.

Encoben (2029) asserts that public-school teachers in the Department Education have not fully embraced the inclusive education. Teachers were more aware of the need for updated special education training that would equip them in handling pupils' behavior and would provide them teaching strategies in imparting lessons to the mainstream pupils. Teachers were favorable to inclusive education. However, they need to be exposed to training, seminars, and workshops. They were favorable in collaborating with administrators, special education teachers, and mainstream teachers. Teachers were having difficulty in collaborating with the special education teachers since the latter did not monitor or evaluate the progress of the mainstream pupils. However, the teachers are prepared and willing to work with children with disabilities. Teachers were skilled on a personal level. However, Teachers needed teaching strategies in handling the mainstream pupils. The age of the teacher

is the predictor to the success of inclusive education. It could be because of the experience they had with the pupils with special needs. Finally, the mainstream teachers had difficulties in embracing the program fully.

Teachers Efficacy in handling learners with Special Educational Needs

Kazanopoulos, Basogain and Tejada (2022) asserts that teachers in the current study presented high efficacy to use inclusive instructions to collaborate and deal with disruptive behaviors. Self-efficacy was higher for teachers of special education, who are trained in special education, have more than 1-year experience in special education, have at least one kind of training, and have participated in a conference. Demographic characteristics, such as age and gender did not seem to be significant factors in the formation of self-efficacy towards inclusive practices, while the effect of teaching experience in special education was statistically significant on all components of the self-efficacy scale. Finally, teachers who are trained in another scientific field presented a higher ability to collaborate, while teachers who have trained in another seminar are more capable to deal with disruptive behaviors. This finding reinforces the need for more teacher training and the development of their confidence in the implementation of inclusive practices in secondary schools. In addition, policymakers could consider developing more training programs for in-service teachers to help them get acquainted with the most effective inclusive teaching practices. More organized research is recommended for proper generalization of the results.

Teacher self-efficacy for classroom management is an important component of teachers' identity with implications for their teaching quality. Theoretically, it has been described that contextual variables play an important role for self-efficacy development and its consequences. However, little is known about the interrelationships of job resources and demands with teacher self-efficacy, and consequences for teachers' professional behaviors. (Lazarides, Watt and Richardson 2020).

Muchena K. (2019) study shows that there is a strong relationship between teacher efficacy and student motivation. Apart from imparting knowledge and skills, teacher's efficacy also helps children to define who they are and ultimately influence their motivation and performance. From daily interactions with teachers, children learn whether they are important or insignificant, bright or slow, liked or disliked. Teachers transmit these messages by the way they speak to children, their facial expressions and gestures, and by the amount of time, they devote to each individual student. Often teachers point out students' deficiencies more than praising them for their efforts and (small) improvements. For many children this is very discouraging and may result in feelings of inferiority and failure.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this research was to explore the readiness and efficacy levels of teachers in managing learners with special educational needs. Specifically, the study aimed to assess teachers' preparedness in terms of classroom instruction, curriculum content, assessment of learners' performance, and evaluation and monitoring of learners' progress. In addition, the research evaluated the efficacy of teachers in collaborating with parents and other professionals, addressing disruptive behavior, and delivering inclusive instruction. Lastly, the study investigated whether there was a significant relationship between the readiness and efficacy of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The current study was conducted at a public school located in the first district of the Division of Davao Oriental. The sample consisted of 30 special education receiving teachers in elementary schools. Moreover, this study was conducted through the use of a descriptive -correlational method approach. Before the collection of data through survey questionnaire, the researcher asked permission and secure an approval from principals and school heads of the chosen school where the data was collected. Upon complying with all the needed permissions, the informed assent form was being prepared.

Thus, assent form was read by the respondents and was properly explained by the researcher. There was also a brief orientation about the purpose of the study, the rights and privileges of the respondents.

A questionnaire about the readiness of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs was adapted from a study authored by Dioso, Iglisia and Ramiro (2022). It consisted of forty (40) items. There were ten (10) items included in each indicator with the scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. And the

questionnaire about the efficacy of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs was also adapted from a study authored by Kazanopoulos, Tejada, and Basogain, (2022). It consisted of forty (18) items. There were six (6) items included in each indicator with the scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. The data gathered was analyzed using statistical measures.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tables below presents and analyzes the findings obtained in this study related to the readiness and efficacy of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs.

Table 1. Summary on the Level of Readiness among Teachers handling Learners with Special Educational Needs.

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Classroom Instruction	0.42	4.68	Very High
Curriculum Content	0.58	4.45	Very High
Assessment of Learners' Performance	0.38	4.57	Very High
Evaluating and Monitoring Learners' Progress	0.34	4.71	Very High
Overall	0.39	4.60	Very High

The data in Table 1 reflects a high level of readiness among teachers in handling learners with special needs. This readiness is crucial to ensure the effective education and inclusion of students with diverse learning requirements. The assessment of readiness in classroom instruction, curriculum adaptation, and progress monitoring indicates the preparedness of teachers to cater to the unique needs of learners with special educational needs (LSEs).

In particular, among the four indicators in readiness of teachers in handling learners with special educational needs, respondents perceived that evaluating and monitoring learners' progress has the highest mean score. Based on the results of gathered data, the evaluating and monitoring learners' progress gets a mean of 4.71 or very high. This further implies that teachers who are handling learners with special educational needs achieve the highest level of readiness to consistently record the progress of students in their classes.

The findings prove the idea of Dioso et. al (2022) that teachers' readiness for inclusive special education was established with the provided Inservice training for professional development. However, further trainings in handling students with special needs in an inclusive setting should be given emphasis. Additional special education support, opportunities, and resources are needed to increase the level of teachers' readiness for inclusive special education.

The second highest indicator is classroom instruction with a mean of 4.68 or very high. This implies that the respondents are highly prepared and able to master the ways on how they could effectively handle and motivate learners with and without special educational needs to engage in learning in an inclusive special education setting. The high mean score and low standard deviation suggest a consistent and high level of readiness among teachers in delivering classroom instruction for learners with special educational needs (LSEs). This is a crucial aspect as effective classroom instruction is fundamental to supporting the diverse learning needs of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEs).

The third highest indicator is assessment of learners' performance with a mean of 4.57 or very high. This means that the teachers' extent of readiness in assessing learners with special educational needs is very high. The high mean and low standard deviation reflect a consistent and high level of readiness in assessing the performance of learners with special needs. Effective assessment strategies are vital for understanding students' progress and adjusting instructional approaches accordingly.

The lowest indicator albeit is still very high, is readiness in terms of curriculum content with the mean of 4.45 or very high. Teachers demonstrate a very high level of readiness in adapting and tailoring curriculum content to meet the specific needs of learners with special needs. The slightly higher standard deviation might indicate a slightly wider range of readiness levels compared to other indicators.

These result contradicts to study of Encoben, M. (2019) which results revealed that the public-school teachers in the Department Education have not fully embraced the inclusive education. The need for training for teachers should include learners with various needs and interests in structuring lessons. It is important also to educate school heads, special educators, mainstream teachers, and regular teachers on the importance of collaboration among them. Furthermore, it is significant to educate teachers in identifying and applying appropriate and relevant teaching/learning strategies and assessment in inclusive education.

Moreover, recent studies highlight the importance of comprehensive assessment and progress monitoring Fuchs, Fuchs, and Stecker (2017). Careful Progress monitoring aids teacher and student support teams in making instructional decisions throughout all levels of response to intervention.

Table 2. Summary on the Level of Efficacy among Teachers handling Learners with Special Needs

Indicators	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Collaboration with parents and other professionals	0.33	4.77	Very High
Dealing with Disruptive behaviors	0.43	4.67	Very High
Inclusive Instruction	0.36	4.72	Very High
Overall	0.35	4.72	Very High

The data on Table 2 demonstrates a high level of efficacy among teachers in handling learners with special needs. Effective collaboration with parents and professionals, managing disruptive behaviors, and implementing inclusive instruction methods are vital for providing a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

The indicator with the highest mean and low standard deviation is the collaboration with parents and other professionals with the mean of 4.77 and 0.33 SD which suggest a consistently high level of efficacy among teachers in collaborating with parents and other professionals. Effective collaboration is vital in creating a supportive environment for learners with special needs.

This is contradicting to the study conducted by Gathumbi et.al (2015) which revealed that physical infrastructure and instructional resources are not adequate to support learners with special needs. There was general lack of specialized training for the teachers and therefore, they do not have satisfactory pedagogical knowledge base to handle students with special needs. School management policies regarding learners with special needs seemed not to be comprehensive enough to cater for all students. Even though teachers and administrators hold regular meetings, collaboration among them falls below expectation and needs to be improved.

The second indicator with the high mean is the inclusive instruction with the mean of 4.72 or very high. This implies that teachers exhibit a high level of efficacy in implementing inclusive instruction methods for learners with special educational needs.

The indicator with the lowest mean but still in very high level is dealing with disruptive behaviors with a mean of 4.67 or very high. This implies that respondents demonstrate a high level of efficacy in dealing with disruptive behaviors among learners with special educational needs. The slightly higher standard deviation indicates a slightly wider range of efficacy levels in handling disruptive behaviors.

The overall high mean score indicates a strong collective efficacy among teachers in handling learners with special needs across the evaluated indicators. The low standard deviation suggests a relatively consistent level of efficacy across these aspects.

The results indicate a commendable level of efficacy among teachers in various key areas related to handling learners with special needs. Effective collaboration with parents and professionals, dealing with disruptive behaviors, and implementing inclusive instruction are vital aspects for ensuring the success of learners with special needs.

The consistent and high level of efficacy, as indicated by the mean scores and relatively low standard deviations, is a positive sign for the educational system. It suggests that teachers are confident and competent in handling the unique challenges and requirements associated with teaching students with special needs.

Yet, these results contradict with the study, of Encoben M. (2019) The need for training for teachers should include learners with various needs and interests in structuring lessons. It is important also to educate school heads, special educators, mainstream teachers, and regular teachers on the importance of collaboration among them. Furthermore, it is significant to educate teachers in identifying and applying appropriate and relevant teaching/learning strategies and assessment in inclusive education.

These findings can inform the development of further training programs and initiatives to enhance specific areas of efficacy and promote a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for learners with special needs.

In a research study by Adam, Harris and Jones (2016) underscores that teacher-parent collaboration provides the pathway to successful achievement of inclusive classrooms; however, an education system consisting of inclusive classrooms remains the final step in an educational journey. The high mean score for collaboration with parents and professionals in our study aligns with the findings of their research, suggesting a strong emphasis on collaboration as an essential component of teacher efficacy in our context.

Moreover, the high mean score for dealing with disruptive behaviors in our study indicates a high level of efficacy in this area, which is essential for maintaining a conducive learning environment for all students.

Table 3. Relationship between Readiness and Efficacy among Teachers handling Learners with Special Needs

Independent Variable	Efficacy among Teachers		Decision on H ₀	Decision on Relationship
	r-value	p-value		
Readiness among Teachers	0.728	<0.001	Reject	Significant

Shown in the table above is the relationship between readiness and efficacy among teachers handling learners with special needs. This further shows that the r-value is 0.728 with a p-value less than 0.001. It then implies that there is a strongly significant relationship between readiness and efficacy. Thus, as the level of the teachers' readiness increases, the level of their efficacy also increases.

The strong positive correlation between teacher readiness and efficacy underscores the importance of adequately preparing and supporting teachers in handling learners with special educational needs (LSEs). By focusing on improving readiness and efficacy through targeted training and continuous professional development, educators can provide a more inclusive and effective learning experience for all students.

The result was actually contradicting to the study of Gyumfi and Yeboah (2022) as their study's findings revealed that teachers felt inept while interacting with kids with special educational needs. Because typical elementary school teachers believe that educating learners with special needs is the task of specially trained teachers, their confidence in dealing with these learners is relatively low.

VI. CONCLUSION

The results of this study provide evidence that the strong positive correlation between teacher readiness and efficacy underscores the importance of adequately preparing and supporting teachers in handling learners with special educational needs. By focusing on improving readiness and efficacy through targeted training and continuous professional development, educators can provide a more inclusive and effective learning experience for all students. These results emphasize the importance of investing in teacher training and development programs that enhance readiness to handle learners with special needs. By improving teachers' readiness, educational institutions can positively impact their efficacy in supporting these students. An integrated approach that combines enhancing both readiness and efficacy is crucial. Training programs should focus on equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively handle learners with special educational needs, thus boosting their overall efficacy. Implementing ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers can help sustain and enhance both readiness and efficacy over time. It's essential to provide continuous support and learning experiences that keep educators updated with best practices and new strategies. Policymakers should consider these findings when shaping policies related to teacher training, educational reforms, and resource allocation to ensure that teachers receive adequate support and training to effectively handle learners with special needs.

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