

# **NO ONE LEFT BEHIND: A PANORAMIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Children with special education needs must be given equal access to quality and relevant education. It employed the qualitative-phenomenology. Results showed that the challenges experienced by teachers on the implementation of inclusive education are diversity of students' behaviors, lack of facilities and resources for learners, learners' learning capability, preparation of learning strategies. The coping mechanisms employed by teachers on the implementation of inclusive education are addressing immediate concerns, motivating oneself, conducting assessment on learners' needs, having proper time management. The pieces of advice where can teachers share to their colleagues in the implementation of inclusive education are compassion and love of the profession, resourceful, collaboration with the stakeholders.

**KEYWORDS:** Inclusive Education, Special Needs, Challenges & Full Support

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Rationale**

The United Nations made a crucial move with regards to inclusive education. This connotes those children regardless of their learning abilities will be catered in the mainstream education. It manifests as well that teachers have to treat these kinds of learners with compassion and fairness. Indeed, they need to have proper training and support from the government.

As a matter of fact, it was stated that inclusive education should be based on the contexts that all children regardless of their differences and disability should have to learn together in one roof. There is no segregation nor division to see that they really have the disabilities. It begins in a premise that all learners shared common characteristics, interests, abilities, and a specific need in learning (Llanto, 2015).

Furthermore, children with special education needs must be given equal access to quality and relevant education. Everyone must be equally accommodated. More so, inclusive means the transition from segregated learning environments to people with disabilities. Its effectiveness needed an in-depth planning and changes in structures to make it relevant with learners with disabilities (Muega, 2016).

Correspondingly, the gap in inclusive education shows that many of the researches relative to the topic were conducted in the international setting (Lindsay, 2003; Thomas & Vaughan, 2004; Stubbs, 2008). Though there were conducted in the contexts of the Philippines (Llanto, 2015; Muega, 2016; Dela Fuente, 2021) but all of these did not cover the picture in the local arena. Hence, the reason for the conceptualization of this study.

Above all, this study will look into the lens of the public-school teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. Exclusivity has no rooms for learning for inclusivity gives the learners the opportunities to grow and show their

hidden talents and skills. Thus, the researcher is motivated to pursue this study in the Municipality of Makilala.

### 1.1.1 Research Questions

- What are the challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education in the secondary level?
- What strategies do they employ to cope with these challenges?
- What pieces of advice can these teachers share to their colleagues in the teaching profession?

### 1.1.2 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study will be limited on the implementation of inclusive education among the secondary schools in the Municipality of Makilala during the School Year 2021-2022. Excluded in this study are those teachers from the elementary level. This will be conducted during the Second Semester.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed the qualitative-phenomenology. Qualitative is defined as the process of collecting non-numerical data such as the texts, video, audio, pictures, and the like. Its central purpose is to understand the experiences, concepts, and opinions. It can be utilized to gather in-depth information which cannot be interpreted quantitatively. In the same manner, it is a flexible approach used on focusing on retaining rich meaning when analyzing the data (Silverman, 2020).

At one hand, this study is phenomenology. As mentioned by Creswell (2013), its goal is to describe the meaning of the experiences by answering questions how and what it was experienced. This is known to be effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals based on their personal experiences (Hennink et al., 2020).

On the other hand, this study is qualitative-phenomenology because it allows to seek meaning on the lives of the informants and participants relative to the implementation of inclusive education in the secondary school. Consequently, this design will lead the researcher to have the thick description of the phenomenon in order to have an in-depth interpretation which cannot be gauged using quantitative approaches.

### 2.2 Informants of the Study

The participants of the study involved 10 teachers. To support their responses, Focus Group Discussion will be conducted. They will be chosen using the following criteria:

- A public-school teacher in the Municipality of Makilala;
- Handling secondary students; and
- Must be at least 3 years in the present position.

### 2.3 Locale of the Study

This study conducted in among the secondary schools in the Municipality of Makilala. This secondary schools caters the children with special needs.

### 2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The following protocols were observed in the conduct of the study. First, I wrote a letter to Schools Division Superintendent of Cotabato asking permission to interview and duly noted by my research adviser and the dean of the Graduate School. Upon approval, I wrote a letter to the Barangay Captain so that I have the easy access to the community. On the selection of the informants and participants, I have to adhere to the criteria.

After the selection will be done, I will give the consent-to-participate form to the target informants and participants. This explains their willingness to participate as well as their rights as to withdraw anytime. Their signature is the manifestation of their participation in the study which will allow the researcher to proceed to the next phase which is the interview. Consequently, I will prepare the interview guide which contains open-ended questions. This will be validated by the panel of experts.

The Key Informants will be first interviewed individually. This will be followed by the Focus Group Discussion which is mainly composed of 5-25 individuals. However, with the threat of the virus health protocols will be observed by the researcher. As a sign of reciprocity, a token of gratitude will be given to them. This is to thank them for the time they have spent for the success of the interview. After which, I will transcribe the audio-recorded responses in verbatim manner. This will be followed with the translation to English.

To check the consistency, fluency, and grammatical contents an expert in language will do the checking. This will be followed by the thematic analysis which will be done by the data analyst. Each theme will be discussed profoundly.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **3.1 Challenges Experienced by Teachers on the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Table 1 presents the challenges experiences by teachers on the implementation of inclusive education.

##### **Diversity of Students' Behaviors**

One of the themes which emerged during the interview with regards to the challenges experienced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education is the presence of diversity of learners. During the interview, it was revealed that:

*"The problems are diverse behavior of learners and different learning style" (P3)*

In addition, it was seconded by another participant who said that:

*"Behavioral problems of the learners; Students have difficulty in following instructions." (P6)*

Undeniably, it has been noted that the implementation of inclusive education is faced with the diversity of learners. Each learner in the class possessed different learning attitudes towards learning. There are those who can easily understand the lesson. Also, there are those who could hardly expressed themselves. Thus, at the end of the class, they came out of the classrooms empty-handed.

Indeed, teachers needed to have proper training. They should be aware that teaching is not an easy task. It is always coupled with a lot of challenges. With the presence of diverse learners, it cannot be denied that teachers may face anxiety and other problems. With this, it was suggested that they have to work closely with their colleagues who are seasoned in the teaching profession (Florian, 2008).

##### **Lack of Facilities and Resources for Learners**

Another problem which was encountered in the implementation of inclusive education is the lack of facilities and resources for learners. There are no sufficient tools which are needed for helping students with special needs. As stated during the interview:

*“Lack of facilities for students with disabilities.” (P4)*

This was supported by the narrative of another participant:

*“Availability of teaching and learning resources.” (P5)*

Because of the lack of available learning resources, teachers found it to handle the implementation of inclusive education. There polarity of learners in the class is extreme. This means that there are those who can easily understand the lessons and those who could hardly get it. With the absence of the needed facilities, teachers cannot easily provide the necessary strategies that should fit to the needs of every learner.

As a support, Hay et al. (2001) noted that school facilities are crucial in honing the capabilities of the learners. Teachers can use them to create meaningful activities that may motivate learners to participate in the class discussions and activities. In addition, learners can have the drive to pursue for a higher learning if they themselves saw their worth through the utilization of different facilities integrated in during the teaching-learning process.

### **Learners’ Learning Capacity**

Correspondingly, the teachers were also challenged by the learners’ learning capability. Because of the diversity, there are those who cannot immediately grasp the contexts of the lessons. It was mentioned during the interview that:

*“Intelligence level of every learner is hard to cope. Like giving a specific task to them but some cannot answer because they can’t even read properly and became worst during the pandemic.” (P8)*

Meanwhile:

*“Inclusive education is known to be the most effective way to give the learners an equal chance to avail education and to learn and improve their skills, as a public-school teacher, and a special reading coordinator, I intent to practice the inclusive education but lack of understanding on different learning challenges among students and how to deal with them. Aside from that practicing this method is a heavy workload which demands more time specially in the preparation for the educational aids.” (P10)*

One the challenges being faced by the teachers is the capacity of the learners with special educational needs mainstreamed in regular classes. The value of inclusive education is good in itself but there are many factors to be considered and one of which is the disparity of learners capacitate to comprehend the lessons. Teachers need to reteach the same concept since there are those slow learners to be considered. Not only that, they have to demystify the topics in the level of their learners.

In congruence, it was mentioned that the capacity of the learner is one of the challenges faced by teachers. It did not only happen in the basic education but also in the tertiary level. This kind of predicament hampered teachers to proceed to the next topic where they have to consider also the next skills to be learners. But the best remedy is for teachers to give time for learners facing this kind of dilemma (Ofori, 2017).

**Preparation of Learning Strategies**

In the preparation of the learning strategies, there are many things that they need to consider especially on the proper learning strategies which could motivate the learners to participate in the class activities. This was supported by their responses who said that:

*“Students with special needs are difficult to find activities that may suit to their needs in which they combined also those normal learners.” (P7)*

*“There are time consuming preparation of different strategies and activities towards my diverse learners is the most common problem I encountered in implementation of inclusive education.” (P10)*

With the disparity of learning capabilities of learners in the class because of the implementation of inclusive education, teachers could hardly prepare learning strategies that suit to the different types of learners in the class. Without proper learning strategies that could catch the attention of the learners, teachers’ pedagogy is in the verge of total fiasco as they cannot reach on their target learning skills.

The preparation of learning strategies must consider the types of learners in the class. Different learners mean different need towards learning. Thus, teachers have to cross the line by finding the suited strategies which will empower every learner to arrive in the same direction of education. On the contrary, depriving learners with opportunities is a big issue to be solved (Zwane &Malale, 2018).

**Table 1: Themes and Core Ideas on the Challenges Experienced by Teachers on the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Diversity of Students’ Behaviors	Typical	There are different types of learners in the class with different learning capabilities.
Lack of Facilities and Resources for Learners	Variant	There no sufficient facilities which are needed for helping the students with special needs.
Learners’ Learning Capability	Typical	There are learners who cannot immediately grasp the contexts of the lessons.
Preparation of Learning Strategies	Variant	There are many things that they need to consider especially on the proper learning strategies which could motivate the learners to participate in the class activities.

Legend

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

### 3.2 Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers on the Implementation of Inclusive Education

It is presented on table 2 the coping mechanisms employed by teachers on the implementation of inclusive education. There are four themes which emerged in the analysis of the data.

#### Addressing Immediate Concerns

The first theme is on the addressing of immediate concerns. They immediately responded to the root cause of problems they experienced in the implementation of inclusive education. Indeed, they said that:

*“Prioritizing immediate concerns; regular validation and dialogue in addressing emerging concerns; plan flexibility and adjustment; training needs assessment of teachers; extensive monitoring and evaluation.”* (P1)

In addition with this,

*“In order to cope and overcome these problems, the teacher should know the root problem in every problematic student, find ways to solve these problems and understand their situations.”* (P8)

In order to respond to the needs of the learners in an inclusive education, it was necessary for teachers to give immediate respond to the concerns of their learners. Through this, they could be able to find the better solutions to the problems that they are facing in the class. It cannot be denied that teacher can easily cope with the challenges since it is innate with them to make things right.

As mentioned, teachers who can find means in responding to the needs of the learners have the highest probability of making learning fun. They intend to search for meaning that will be appreciated by their learners (Swart et al., 2002). From that, it is just easy for them to handle learners with diverse learning capabilities. Not to mention that they can think for strategies well-suited to their learners' needs.

#### Motivating Oneself

In order to cope with the challenges, they tried to motivate themselves. The teachers pushed themselves to find ways to improve their pedagogical skills in the facing the challenges brought by the mainstreaming of students all students in inclusive education. This was supported a narrative of the participant who stated that:

*“More motivation for myself to give the best of what I have and being flexible in all ways.”* (P3)

Highly motivated teachers are what the students' needs. They have the vigor to touch the hearts and lives of the learners to continue with studies. In this regard, this will be shared to the latter to motivate themselves as well and help themselves to have the grasp of the bodies of knowledge. Motivation enabled an individual to become wide reader where they can learn more strategies to be employed in their respective classes.

Motivation was found to be the driving force for teachers. If they have the higher level of it, they can make a difference on the lives of their students. In the sense that they can find better solutions to problems. More importantly, they can enhance their pedagogical skills crucial to making learners the best version of themselves (Ahsan, Deppeler & Sharma, 2013).

#### Conducting Assessment on Learners' Needs

The teachers also conducted assessment on learners' needs. The teachers made evaluation to properly respond to the needs

of their learners. Hence, they responded that:

*“Conduct assessment with regards to the specific needs of the learner, after that we can do proper treatment just to handle the class equally and smoothly.” (P7)*

Determining the capabilities of each learner will enable them to know their needs. Through this, they can design strategies and make the students eager to learn. In addition, it makes them fair and just in determining the proper intervention to those who need their attention and help. Furthermore, teachers who conduct assessments would know which of the parts of the lessons is beyond students' comprehension.

The giving of assessments should vary to the types of learners. Learners who cannot easily understand the lesson should be given a different one than those who are fast learners. This will open opportunity so that every phase of the lesson is well-understood before they proceed to the complicated one (Mitiku et al., 2014).

### **Having Proper Time Management**

They believed that having proper time management eventually exonerate them from the challenges. The teachers made it certain that they handled their time wisely in the implementation of the program. They mentioned during the interview that:

*“The most effective way in overcoming the problem is having an excellent time management skills.” (P10)*

Teachers learned to manage their time. Basically, they have to consider all learners. They have to give different activities. By managing their time properly, they can provide more learning opportunities during free time. In the same vein, the teachers also have more time in making instructional materials and developing strategies.

Time management for teachers means that they know how to give importance on things that promote productivity. It connotes that teachers will be able to allow more rooms for learning (Dash, 2006). They have the drive to encourage learning within the four corners of the classrooms. Students will be provided with more time to engage into meaningful learning opportunities.

**Table 2: Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers on the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Addressing Immediate Concerns	Typical	The teachers immediately responded to the root cause of problems they experienced in the implementation of inclusive education.
Motivating Oneself	Variant	The teachers pushed themselves to find ways to improve their pedagogical skills in the facing the challenges brought by the mainstreaming of students all students in inclusive education.  The teachers made evaluation to properly respond to the needs of their learners.
Conducting Assessment on Learners' Needs	Typical	The teachers made it certain that they handled their time wisely in the implementation of the program.
Having Proper Time Management	Variant	

Legend

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

**3.3 Pieces of Advice where can Teachers Share to their Colleagues in the Implementation of Inclusive Education**

Table 3 presents the themes and core ideas on the pieces of advice where can teachers share to their colleagues in the implementation of inclusive education.

**Compassion and Love of the Profession**

They believed that compassion and love of the profession will strengthen teachers' will towards the teaching profession. Teachers should have to show love with the teaching profession especially in handling the learners. Hence, during the interview it was stated that:

*“If I am share something to other teachers about the implementation of inclusive education, I would just say that they should have enough patience, love, and courage in handling learners with special needs.” (P2)*

The love of the profession runs in the veins of teachers. They considered every learner as special, they gave the best of their abilities to understand that learners need them. Learning can happen when teachers are compassionate and dedicated towards the profession. They do not look into the negative side of teaching but look it as an opportunity to grow and foster. For them, they are strong enough in facing the challenges.



Compassionate teachers touch the hearts and lives of the students. They can understand how the students struggled with their journey in order to learn difficult topics. But, they made it sure that at the end of the day the students appreciated and internalized those bodies of knowledge and applied them (Nazibullov at al., 2015).

### **Resourceful**

In the same manner, resourcefulness is a must for teachers. They should have to find means to cater the needs of their learners. The narratives of the teachers revealed that:

*“Being resourceful, systematic, and strategic teacher.”* (P3)

They added that:

*“Patience and commitment, student be left behind really matter in inclusive education, when a learner has special needs, long patience is a must, teachers must be innovative also so the learners will have interest in learning.”* (P9)

Teaching profession provided us with the glimpse of beauty of how teachers looked for ways which enhanced their pedagogical competencies. It cannot be denied that the support given to them by the government is not that substantial, yet they find ways which they can give the best of their abilities to their learners. Like for example, they use instructional materials that can be found in the locality. Through this, they can simplify the concepts easy for the students to internalize.

As Tiwari et al. (2015) said that resourcefulness of teachers can be seen in terms of their effort in making learning fun and meaningful for the learners. In the same vein, they could apply all the needed skills and competencies crucial for the learning outcomes and achievements. These are all mirrored on the behavior and performance of every learner.

## **4. COLLABORATION WITH THE STAKEHOLDERS**

For the teachers, they need to collaborate with the stakeholders. The teachers should have to work closely with the LGU and parents of their learners. In the interview, it was shared that:

*Consult first the Parent Teacher Association as well as stakeholders to provide proper resources, availability of trained teachers with these children with special needs.* (P5)

The school will not succeed in the implementation of programs without the help shared by the stakeholders. Partnership with the Local Government Units exemplified that they can provide things that school needs. Aside from that, the school needs the help of the parents who are their partners in reaching the school’s mission and vision. Their absence will lead to total failure.

In line with this, it was reiterated that teacher and stakeholders’ collaboration is a must. One needs the other. For the improvement of the community, teachers honed their children. In return, the community has to provide the necessary help especially in teaching their children at home. Some projects will be implemented through their partnership for the overall well-being of the school children in general (Nel et al., 2014).

### **4.1 Implications for Practice**

The implementation of inclusive education gives better opportunities to different types of learners. Mainstreaming of learners with special educational needs may be difficult for the teachers, however, it presented that teachers can handle

every situation. Hence, it manifested their dedication in the teaching profession. They find ways in order to touch the hearts and lives of the learners regardless of the mental and physical capabilities.

In this regard, teachers are looked as models in the implementation of the said program. As they gave their hearts, they are passionate enough in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. Though, there are many concerns that they faced, but these did not hinder them to give quality and relevant education to their learners. They have showed their strengths in facing all the aridity.

In the like manner, teachers needed patience in handling learners with different attitudes. It is the reality of the implementation of the program not only in the Department of Education but also in the State Universities and Colleges. But, with the compassion exemplified by teachers, they were able to overcome all the challenges. They have presented that indeed; they have the strength and vigor which enabled them to give the best of their abilities.

More importantly, this study implies that regardless of the learning abilities of the students they are all welcome to hone their capabilities through the help of their teachers. They should not be barred in coming to school because every child is special. It is within the teachers' abilities to enthusiastically shared their skills to their learners regardless of their learning potentialities.

#### **4.2 Implications for Future Research**

I considered this study as timely and relevant. As a teacher, I saw that there is a dire need for us teachers to strengthen our commitment. The importance of research is seen as one of the best elixirs in solving predicaments faced by teachers in the implementation of inclusive education. It cannot be denied that by listening from the experiences of the teachers, I was able to understand them. The same on how I appreciated learners with their quest for a higher learning despite of the mere fact that they struggled.

Future researchers may settle to use the themes as the variables and dimensions of coming up with a questionnaire. The beauty of research is that one methodology can be used to check the truthfulness of the findings of the study. Though, there may have some disparity, however, it is directed to one direction.

Correspondingly, they could conduct the same study using the quantitative and mixed methods. Different variables and dimensions could still be determined which are not found in this qualitative study. More importantly, the results of the study could be utilized to support and negate researches relative to the implementation of inclusive education in the Philippines and in the local setting.

Comparative analysis could also be conducted especially on the findings in different regions of the country. Through this, the Department of Education and Commission on Higher Education may frame another approach which would aim at improving the delivery of teaching. With this, they can see the importance of capacitating teachers to become the agents of change.

#### **4.3 Concluding Remarks**

As a researcher I saw the beauty of teaching. It is not just healing ignorance, but it provided better learning opportunities to everyone regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religious affiliations, and learning capabilities. Everyone is welcome in the school to engage into various learning points which would capacitate them to become productive citizens of this country.

Looking into the contexts of inclusive education, I do not see any bad at it. It is always within teachers' drive to exonerate learners from the shackle of ignorance. Every learner has the right to be educated and the right to be loved and given the necessary teaching. They can make themselves stronger as they face their own life's journey.

We cannot see the beauty of teaching if we ourselves is blinded by our poor strategies. Therefore, it is a must for us to understand that we are born to serve and lead. We are important drivers of change of this country. Our absence means a total fiasco in human development.

Lastly, I can say that being a teacher is a gift in the sense that I can act in different situations. I considered myself to have full of strengths and motivated to reach out every learner. Above all, I do not choose my learners. It is my sole responsibility to provide them the best strategies and to bring them into the contexts of the lesson so that they could internalize it and apply it in their day-to-day lives.

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