

Teachers' Knowledge and Attitude towards Inclusion in Public Elementary Schools of Mataasnakahoy, Batangas

Lyn L. Mabongna

Department of Education, Paaralang Sentral ng Mataasnakahoy Mataasnakahoy, Batangas

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-survey study investigated the knowledge and attitude of teachers in all public elementary schools of Mataasnakahoy District, Division of Batangas toward the inclusion of children with special educational needs (CSEN) in regular classrooms. The study involved a population of 120 teachers and school heads, from which 85 respondents were selected through simple random sampling for testing. Data were gathered through a questionnaire containing structured knowledge items, attitude statements, and an interview component. The results showed an average level of knowledge toward inclusion, with 55.08% average correct responses. The overall attitude toward inclusion was partly positive, with an overall weighted mean of 2.52. The professional, philosophical, and logistical dimensions obtained weighted means of 2.52, 2.53, and 2.51, respectively. Among the profile variables examined, gender showed a statistically significant relationship with attitude toward inclusion ($r = 0.275$, $p = 0.011$), while the other profile variables did not show significant relationships. The correlation between knowledge and attitude was also not significant ($r = -0.088$, $p = 0.425$). Based on the findings, the study proposed a seminar-workshop and related school-based activities focused on strengthening teachers' understanding of inclusive education, building confidence and positive attitudes, improving classroom and behavioral-management strategies, and providing opportunities for open discussion and collaboration.

Index Terms: inclusive education, teachers' knowledge, teachers' attitude, special educational needs, public elementary schools, Mataasnakahoy, Batangas, teacher preparedness

INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted in Mataasnakahoy, Batangas, where the researcher works as a public elementary school teacher. The original study covered the nine public elementary schools in the district and examined teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward the inclusion of children with special educational needs (CSEN). The research was motivated by the need to understand how inclusive education is understood and practiced in the local school context.

The policy context reinforces the need for school-level and district-level support. DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019 identifies inclusive education as a core principle of the K to 12 Basic Education Program, while DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021 provides policy guidelines on educational programs and services for learners with disabilities. Republic Act No. 7277, as amended, likewise recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to access quality education and provides for appropriate educational support. In this context, the present findings are used not only to describe teachers' knowledge and attitudes but also to identify practical mechanisms that may strengthen implementation at the district and school levels.

Inclusive education is presented in the source research as an approach that moves away from segregating learners with special educational needs and toward adapting schools to meet the needs of all learners. The study cites the goal of Education for All and emphasizes that inclusion requires attention to barriers to participation, teacher preparation, appropriate support services, and collaboration among school

stakeholders. DECS Order No. 26, s. 1997 is discussed in relation to the institutionalization of SPED programs and the role of SPED centers as resource centers for inclusive education.

The literature reviewed in the original study identifies teachers' knowledge and attitudes as important considerations in the implementation of inclusion. The research cites studies describing concerns about teacher preparedness, professional development, administrative support, classroom demands, and collaboration with special education personnel. Local literature cited by the researcher likewise points to the need for teachers to understand inclusive education and to develop the knowledge and skills required to support learners with disabilities in regular classrooms.

Against this background, the study sought to determine the profile of the respondents, their knowledge toward inclusion, their attitudes in terms of professional issues, philosophical issues, and logistical concerns, the relationship of knowledge and attitude with selected profile variables, and an action plan that could enhance teachers' knowledge and attitude toward inclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study employed a descriptive-survey design with both quantitative and qualitative components. Structured questions were used to assess knowledge, scaled statements were used to measure attitudes, and open-ended interview questions were used to provide additional qualitative information.

Participants and Sampling. The target population consisted of 120 teachers and school heads from nine public elementary schools in Mataasnakahoy District. The population included four principals, five head teachers, 16 master teachers, and 95 Teachers I–III. Simple random sampling was used to select 85 respondents for testing. The original research states that the sample was determined using Cohen's sample table, with a medium effect size, power of .80, and alpha of .05 for the test of significant relationship.

Research Instrument. The questionnaire was developed using materials from related studies and was reviewed by the researcher's adviser before validation. It included demographic profile questions, 20 knowledge items answerable by Yes/No, attitude statements measured on a four-point scale, and an interview component. The attitude dimensions covered professional issues, philosophical issues, and logistical concerns regarding inclusion.

Data Collection and Ethics. The researcher sought permission from the District Supervisor before distribution of the questionnaires. The instruments were distributed to teachers and school heads in the district, collected over a two-week period, and followed by the interview component with the sampled respondents. The names of participating schools and respondents were not reported in the research article for ethical and privacy reasons. **Data Analysis.** Weighted mean was used to summarize attitude responses. The study classified attitude as Positive (3.50–4.00), Somewhat/Partly Positive (2.50–3.49), Somewhat/Partly Negative (1.50–2.49), and Negative (1.00–1.49). Knowledge scores were classified as Low (0–33), Average (34–67), and High (68–100). The Shapiro-Wilk test was used to assess normality, and Spearman Rank Correlation was used to examine relationships between the study variables and respondent profiles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile. The original research reported a total population profile of 120 respondents. The distribution below reproduces the demographic summary presented in the study.

Profile Variable	Category	f	%
Age	20–29	18	14.2
	30–39	39	32.5

	40–49	44	36.7
	50 up	19	15.8
Gender	Male	13	10.0
	Female	107	89.2
Educational attainment	Tertiary	70	58.3
	Graduate	50	41.7
Years of service	1–10	48	40.0
	11–20	41	33.3
	21–30	26	21.7
	Above 30	5	4.2
Position	T1–T3	95	79.2
	MT1–MT3	16	13.3
	HT1–HT3	5	4.2
	P1–P3	4	3.3
Area of specialization	General Education	73	60.8
	English	8	6.7
	Educational Management	18	15.0
	Science	7	5.8
	Mathematics	8	6.7
	Early Childhood Education	3	2.5
	Special Education	3	2.5

The respondents were predominantly female (89.2%), and the largest age group was 40–49 years (36.7%). General Education was the most common area of specialization (60.8%), while most respondents were in the Teacher I–III group (79.2%).

Knowledge Toward Inclusion. The study measured knowledge using 20 structured items. The average of correct responses was 55.08%, which fell within the study's Average Knowledge classification (34.00–67.00). The strongest correct-response rates reported in the study were for Item 5 (83.3%), Item 3 (80.0%), Item 17 (79.2%), Item 11 (78.3%), and Item 14 (76.7%). The study also reported high proportions of incorrect responses for Item 2 (91.7%), Item 6 (55.0%), Item 12 (54.2%), Item 9 (53.3%), and Item 16 (41.7%).

Knowledge Result	Reported Value	Interpretation
Average correct responses	55.08%	Average knowledge
Item 5 – highest correct response	83.3%	Highest among reported items
Item 3	80.0%	High correct-response rate
Item 17	79.2%	High correct-response rate
Item 11	78.3%	High correct-response rate
Item 14	76.7%	High correct-response rate
Item 2 – highest incorrect response	91.7%	Major area of misconception/uncertainty reported
Item 6	55.0%	More than half incorrect
Item 12	54.2%	More than half incorrect
Item 9	53.3%	More than half incorrect
Item 16	41.7%	Largest among the other reported incorrect-response rates

The findings indicate that respondents possessed prior knowledge of inclusion but, according to the original interpretation, still needed deeper understanding of its concepts and implementation. The qualitative responses cited in the study emphasized inclusion as accepting learners with different physical, mental, and emotional needs and providing appropriate support in regular education settings.

Attitude Toward Inclusion. The attitude scale covered three dimensions. The professional-issues dimension obtained a summative weighted mean of 2.52; the philosophical-issues dimension obtained 2.53; and the logistical-concerns dimension obtained 2.51. The overall weighted mean was 2.52, interpreted in the original study as Agree/Partly Positive Attitude.

Attitude Dimension	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Professional issues	2.52	Agree / Partly Positive
Philosophical issues	2.53	Agree / Partly Positive
Logistical concerns	2.51	Agree / Partly Positive
Overall	2.52	Agree / Partly Positive

For professional issues, the highest weighted means were for the willingness of colleagues to help with issues involving CSEN in the classroom (2.76), comfort in collaborating with special education teachers (2.73), and motivation when teaching students with special needs (2.57). Lower ratings were reported for confidence in teaching children with special needs (2.36) and having been adequately trained to meet their needs (2.18).

For philosophical issues, respondents agreed that all children can learn in most environments despite intellectual, physical, and psychological differences (2.79) and that academic progress is possible for children with special needs (2.79). For logistical concerns, the highest rating was for making necessary

physical arrangements in the classroom to meet learners' needs (2.91), followed by the ability to handle students with mild to moderate behavioral problems (2.61). The study also identified concerns about the sufficiency of materials and some aspects of classroom inclusion.

These findings point to a pattern in which respondents expressed support for inclusive principles and collaboration while also reporting limitations in training, confidence, and resources. This pattern is consistent with the literature reviewed in the original research, which emphasized teacher preparation, administrative support, and access to appropriate resources as factors affecting inclusive practice.

Relationship of Knowledge and Attitude with Profile Variables. For inferential analysis, 85 respondents were used after random sampling and demographic categories were recoded. The study used Spearman Rank Correlation because the profile distributions did not pass the normality test.

Relationship Tested	Correlation (r)	p-value	Result
Gender – Knowledge	-0.092	0.402	Not significant
Gender – Attitude	0.275	0.011	Significant
Age – Knowledge	0.157	0.150	Not significant
Age – Attitude	0.022	0.840	Not significant
Degree – Knowledge	0.001	0.992	Not significant
Degree – Attitude	-0.012	0.913	Not significant
Years of service – Knowledge	-0.021	0.846	Not significant
Years of service – Attitude	0.066	0.548	Not significant
Position – Knowledge	-0.137	0.210	Not significant
Position – Attitude	-0.040	0.718	Not significant
Specialization – Knowledge	-0.072	0.511	Not significant
Specialization – Attitude	-0.148	0.177	Not significant
Knowledge – Attitude	-0.088	0.425	Not significant

The source study reported a statistically significant association between gender and attitude toward inclusion ($r = 0.275$, $p = 0.011$), while the other tested profile relationships were not statistically significant at $p < .05$. Knowledge and attitude were also not significantly related ($r = -0.088$, $p = 0.425$). The findings therefore support the study's recommendation for interventions that address teachers' knowledge, confidence, resources, and opportunities for collaboration rather than relying only on demographic characteristics.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study found that public elementary school teachers and school heads in Mataasnakahoy District demonstrated an average level of knowledge toward inclusion, based on the reported 55.08% average correct-response rate. Their overall attitude toward inclusion was partly positive, with an overall weighted mean of 2.52. Across the three dimensions, the results were similarly situated within the partly positive range.

The findings identify specific areas for support. Respondents reported relatively lower confidence and perceived training adequacy, while they showed more favorable responses regarding collaboration with colleagues and special education teachers, belief in the learning potential of children with special needs, and classroom physical arrangements. These results indicate a need for practical, sustained professional learning and accessible technical support rather than one-time orientation alone.

Only gender and attitude showed a statistically significant relationship among the profile variables tested. Age, degree, years of service, position, and specialization did not show significant relationships with knowledge or attitude, and knowledge and attitude themselves were not significantly correlated. The interventions therefore focus on the needs identified in the findings—teacher knowledge, confidence, instructional support, collaboration, and access to appropriate resources—rather than on demographic characteristics.

To translate the findings into practical school and district actions, the proposed plan is strengthened through three additional measures: (1) institutionalizing district-level Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions focused on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), differentiated instruction, classroom and behavior management, and contextualized inclusive education resources; (2) establishing or strengthening an itinerant/roving SPED support mechanism, subject to available qualified personnel and applicable DepEd arrangements, to provide consultation, co-teaching support, and technical assistance to general education teachers handling learners with special educational needs; and (3) incorporating direct classroom observation in future research to complement self-reported survey data and document actual inclusive teaching practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutionalize District-Level LAC Sessions. Conduct focused and recurring LAC sessions on IEP development, differentiated instruction, classroom and behavior management, and practical strategies for supporting learners with special educational needs. Sessions should include contextualized cases and usable classroom materials.
2. Establish or Strengthen Itinerant SPED Support. Explore a district-level mechanism for roving or itinerant SPED specialists to provide consultation, demonstration teaching, co-teaching, and technical assistance to general education teachers handling learners with special educational needs, subject to staffing, qualification, and applicable DepEd policies.
3. Incorporate Direct Classroom Observations in Future Research. Future studies should supplement self-reported survey and interview data with structured classroom observation rubrics to examine how inclusive practices are actually implemented and to identify specific areas for coaching and technical assistance.

Proposed School-Based Action Plan

Program / Project	Key Objectives	Major Activities	Target Timeline
Enhance Knowledge on Inclusive Education Concepts and CSEN Practices	Orient teachers on types of CSEN and inclusive education programs; increase understanding of inclusion.	Seminar-workshop on teacher self-efficacy; contextualization of materials; in-depth discussion of inclusive education programs.	April–May
Enhance Attitude Towards Inclusion Program	Promote positive acceptance of inclusion; orient teachers on classroom and behavior management	Lecture/workshop on reflection and compassion; strategies for handling CSEN and behavior; group	April–May

	for CSEN.	presentation/demonstration.	
District-Level LAC on Inclusive Education	Strengthen teachers' practical knowledge and confidence in IEPs, differentiated instruction, and classroom/behavior management.	Quarterly LAC sessions; case analysis; IEP workshop; differentiated lesson planning; demonstration and peer sharing.	Quarterly; initial roll-out April–May
Itinerant / Roving SPED Support	Provide accessible technical assistance to general education teachers handling learners with special educational needs.	Coordinate with the district/Division for qualified SPED personnel; consultation, co-teaching, demonstration teaching, and coaching.	As needed; monitored each quarter
Inclusive Education Resource Development and Open Forum	Improve access to contextualized materials and provide a venue for teachers to clarify concerns and share workable practices.	Develop/adapt classroom resources; maintain a shared resource bank; conduct open forums with school heads, teachers, and resource persons.	April–May; resource updating throughout the year
Future Research: Direct Classroom Observation	Document authentic inclusive practices and complement self-reported survey findings.	Use structured observation rubrics during future studies; compare observed practices with survey/interview responses.	Next research cycle

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Competing Interests Statement

The source research does not report a separate competing-interests statement. No competing-interest disclosure was included in the original manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The study used primary survey and interview data collected from teachers and school heads. The original research does not identify a public data repository or public release of the underlying respondent-level dataset. The names of participating schools and respondents were not reported in the article for ethical and

privacy reasons. Direct classroom observations were not part of the present study; they are recommended for future research to complement the self-reported data.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Research Instrument Coverage

The original research did not include a separately labeled appendix. The instrument content is represented in the manuscript's reported tables: 20 Yes/No knowledge items on inclusion, attitude statements under professional issues, philosophical issues, and logistical concerns, plus an interview component. The reported knowledge items and attitude statements were retained as part of the source research results.

Appendix B. Financial Report

Particular	Amount	Source
Research allowance/connectivity	₱3,500.00	Personal Funds
Questionnaires / Printing	₱200.00	Personal Funds
Total	₱3,700.00	Personal Funds