

TEACHERS' PREPARATION AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT *Inclusive education has become a key priority in higher education institutions, requiring adequate teacher preparation and effective implementation strategies. This study examined the teachers' preparation and challenges in implementing inclusive education at Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University–Vitali External Program Delivering Unit during the academic year 2023–2024. A descriptive–quantitative correlational research design was employed, involving 46 instructor-respondents selected through total enumeration. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The findings revealed that the level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of delivery and assessment was highly effective, indicating a high level of teacher preparedness. However, instructors encountered notable challenges in the implementation process. Further analysis showed a significant relationship between the level of implementation and teachers' preparation, suggesting that higher preparedness contributes to more effective implementation. In contrast, no significant relationship was found between the level of implementation and the challenges encountered, indicating that these challenges did not directly affect implementation effectiveness. The results imply that instructors demonstrate strong commitment and readiness in integrating inclusive practices despite persistent challenges. It is therefore recommended that institutions strengthen support mechanisms by providing adequate resources, assistive technologies, and continuous professional development programs to enhance inclusive education practices.*

Keywords: inclusive education; teacher preparation; implementation; challenges; higher education

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an educational approach that ensures equitable learning opportunities for all students regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or differences. It promotes inclusive learning environments that accommodate diverse learners by removing barriers to participation, encouraging positive attitudes toward diversity, and adapting instructional strategies and materials to meet individual needs [13]. In this approach, inclusion goes beyond integration by emphasizing active participation and equal access to quality education. A critical factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education is instructors' preparedness. This refers to their knowledge, skills, and readiness to design and implement instructional strategies that support diverse learners. Prepared instructors are expected to modify curriculum content, apply differentiated instruction, and create supportive classroom environments that recognize learners' unique strengths and needs [10]. Thus, teacher readiness is a key determinant of effective inclusive education practices. Existing literature emphasizes that instructors' preparedness is closely linked to the challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education. [2] noted that well-prepared educators are more capable of employing inclusive strategies such as cooperative learning and differentiated instruction while fostering a culture of acceptance and equity. Continuous professional development further strengthens educators' ability to respond to diverse classroom demands and sustain inclusive practices. In higher education settings such as Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University, instructors demonstrate efforts to provide equitable learning opportunities for students with diverse backgrounds and abilities. However, challenges remain, particularly in adapting instructional strategies to diverse learning needs, supporting students with disabilities, and addressing institutional limitations such as inadequate resources and limited training opportunities.

Given these considerations, this study examined teachers' preparedness and the challenges encountered in the implementation of inclusive education in a higher education institution. It aims to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between preparedness and implementation, as well as identify areas for improvement in fostering more effective inclusive education practices.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Below were the questions sought to be answered in this study.

1. What is the level of implementation of inclusive education in terms of:
 - 1.1 delivery
 - 1.2 assessment
2. What are the preparations of instructors toward inclusive education implementation in terms of:
 - 2.1 delivery
 - 2.2 assessment
3. What are the challenges encountered by instructors toward inclusive education implementation in terms of:
 - 3.1 delivery
 - 3.2 assessment
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation and preparation toward inclusive education?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of implementation and challenges encountered toward inclusive education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Republic Act No. 11650, also known as An Act Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education, mandates the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers in all school districts, municipalities, and cities. The law strengthens inclusive education by addressing key

components such as school governance, learner admission, identification and assessment, curriculum development, instructional delivery, evaluation, and support services. Teachers' knowledge of inclusive education is essential in enhancing their adaptability and instructional effectiveness [18]. However, insufficient conceptual understanding of inclusive education among teachers, administrators, and parents may hinder its effective implementation. [12] emphasized that limited understanding of inclusive education may cause teachers to perceive it as an additional burden, especially when they are not adequately prepared for its demands. Effective inclusive education in the 21st century requires educators to understand learner diversity, create supportive learning environments, apply differentiated instruction, collaborate with stakeholders, and continuously monitor learner progress. [20] emphasized that inclusive education is most effective when teachers recognize individual differences, adapt teaching strategies, engage families and communities, and assess learning outcomes to ensure equitable opportunities for all learners. In Guyana, [1] found that negative societal attitudes toward persons with disabilities remain a major barrier to inclusive education implementation, similar to challenges in other developing countries. The study highlights the need for educational leaders and stakeholders to work collaboratively in reshaping societal perceptions and promoting acceptance of learners

with disabilities. Similarly, [17] reported that teacher education programs in Spanish universities largely follow an integration or deficit model that focuses on categorizing learners and addressing difficulties through remedial approaches. This traditional model is considered inconsistent with inclusive education principles. The authors recommend shifting toward flexible, intervention-based pedagogical approaches and conducting comprehensive evaluations of teachers' attitudes to support authentic inclusive education practices.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–quantitative research design with a correlational approach to describe the level of inclusive education implementation, teachers' preparation, and challenges in terms of delivery and assessment, and to determine the relationship among these variables. Descriptive research was used to characterize the current status of the variables, while quantitative methods were applied to analyze numerical data using statistical techniques [7, 4]. In addition, a correlational design was utilized to examine the relationship between teachers' preparation and the challenges encountered in inclusive education implementation. Correlational research determines the degree and direction of relationships between variables using statistical measures [5].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: The Level of Implementation of inclusive Education in terms of Delivery.

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
The instructor...		
1. foster a diverse and welcoming classroom.	3.80	Highly Implemented
2. ensure that learning is accessible to all students.	3.80	Highly Implemented
3. utilize collaborative learning.	3.85	Highly Implemented
4. address potential barriers to ensure equal opportunities for every student.	3.85	Highly Implemented
5. encourage students to comfortably express their unique identities and share experiences.	3.87	Highly Implemented
Over-all mean	3.83	Highly Implemented

Table 1 present that instructors were highly implementing inclusive education with diverse teaching strategies that caters diverse needs of learners. This implies that instructors were actively fostering inclusivity in their teaching methods, addressing potential barriers, and promoting an environment that is welcoming and accessible to all students. The high overall mean signifies a positive overall perception of the implementation of inclusive education practices among the

study participants. As observed, instructors engaged students in a variety of inclusive learning activities, including group discussions, collaborative reporting, and peer teaching, fostering teamwork and diverse perspectives. The incorporation of multimedia elements, such as PowerPoint presentations and the use of videos related to the topic in presentations, accommodated different learning styles, ensuring a more inclusive information delivery.

Table 2: The Level of Implementation of inclusive Education in terms of Assessment

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
The instructor...		
1. employ a variety of assessment methods to embrace inclusive education.	3.74	Highly Implemented
2. adjust assessment tools to cater to the diverse needs of learners.	3.61	Highly Implemented
3. actively seeks input from students during the assessment process.	3.70	Highly Implemented
4. engage in ongoing reflection on assessment practices, demonstrating a commitment to making adjustments that promote fairness and equity for all students.	3.74	Highly Implemented
5. provide constructive and individualized feedback that supports each student's development.	3.72	Highly Implemented
Over-all mean	3.70	Highly Implemented

Table 2 shows that instructors highly implemented assessments in inclusive education. This implies that instructors extensively utilize diverse assessment methods, adapt assessment tools to address the diverse needs of learners, solicit input from students during assessments, consistently reflect on assessment practices, displaying a commitment to making adjustments that enhance fairness and equity for all students, and offer constructive and personalized feedback to support each student's development. As observed, instructors engaged with flexible assessment methods, like quizzes and reflection papers, allowed students to present their understanding through various modalities—combining written reports with visual aids and videos—catering to diverse learning preferences.

This result was supported by the longstanding concept of inclusive assessment is articulated as the development and application of assessment approaches that are equitable and efficient. This involves creating and utilizing methods that empower every student, enabling them to showcase their complete potential in areas such as knowledge, understanding, and abilities, as outlined by [11]. The essence of inclusive assessment lies in the design and implementation of evaluation strategies that ensure fairness and effectiveness, facilitating all students, irrespective of their backgrounds or abilities, to express their true capabilities within an educational setting.

Table 3: Summary of the Level of Implementation of inclusive Education

Variables	Mean	Interpretation
Delivery	3.83	Highly Implemented
Assessment	3.70	Highly Implemented
General Mean	3.77	Highly Implemented

Table 3 shows that both aspects of inclusive education, namely Delivery and Assessment, were highly esteemed and considered to be implemented effectively. This indicates that inclusive education was highly implemented. The robust implementation of inclusive practices in both delivery and assessment aspects suggests a cohesive and well-rounded approach. Inclusive education, as reflected in the study, goes beyond just teaching methods (Delivery) and extends to a comprehensive and effective integration of inclusive principles in the assessment process. This holistic effort not only showcases the instructors' commitment to inclusivity but also reflects positively on the overall educational environment, emphasizing a commendable dedication to fostering a truly inclusive learning atmosphere in the studied context.

This result was supported by [22] the goals of inclusive education is to maintain equity in society and make education

accessible to all students, regardless of their disabilities. It emphasizes that students with special needs can attend regular schools and receive the same education as everyone else. It is possible to provide for the kid with special needs so they can receive the same quality education and resources as other students, without having to confine them with the walls of special school. The result was also in compliance with RA 11650, also known as the Act Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education. This act focuses on establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers for learners with disabilities in all School Districts, Municipalities, and Cities. The legislation addresses various aspects of inclusive education implementation, including institutional administration, student admission, identification, assessment, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and outside supports.

Table 4: The Preparations of Instructors toward inclusive Education Implementation in terms of Delivery

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
My instructor...		
1. proactively searches for resources and information.	3.80	Highly Prepared
2. collaborates with peers to exchange best practices and innovative methods.	3.80	Highly Prepared
3. integrates assistive technologies into their teaching methods.	3.85	Highly Prepared
4. strives to create a variety of instructional materials and activities.	3.85	Highly Prepared
5. solicits feedback from students, placing value on their input.	3.87	Highly Prepared
Over-all mean	3.83	Highly Prepared

Table 4 shows that instructors were very prepared in making significant efforts and taking actions in preparation for the implementation of inclusive education practices. Inclusive education involves creating a learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of all students. Instructors focus on how to convey and present educational content to

students, encompassing instructional methods, teaching materials, and approaches. This implies that instructors have successfully integrated inclusive education principles into their delivery methods, fostering an environment where every student, regardless of differences, can participate and learn effectively.

Table 5: The Preparations of Instructors toward inclusive Education Implementation in terms of assessment

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
My instructor...		
1. emphasizes the importance of self-assessment and reflection.	3.74	Highly Prepared
2. engages in formative assessments throughout the teaching process.	3.57	Highly Prepared
3. encourage peer assessment and collaborative activities.	3.72	Highly Prepared
4. employ authentic assessments, such as project-based tasks and real-world scenarios.	3.7	Highly Prepared
5. incorporate alternative assessment formats, such as oral presentations, portfolios, and practical demonstrations.	3.74	Highly Prepared
Over-all mean	3.70	Highly Prepared

Table 5 shows that instructors have high level of preparations to effectively and consistently executed plans and activities to integrate inclusive education practices into the assessment process. This implies that the preparations made by instructors, such as emphasizes the importance of self-assessment and reflection, encouraging students to evaluate their own progress and set personal learning goals. Engages in formative assessments throughout the teaching process to continuously gauge student understanding and adapt instructional strategies accordingly. Encourage peer

assessment and collaborative activities, promoting a supportive environment where students learn from each other. Employ authentic assessments, such as project-based tasks and real-world scenarios, to ensure that assessments mirror practical applications and appeal to diverse interests and backgrounds and incorporate alternative assessment formats, such as oral presentations, portfolios, and practical demonstrations, recognizing and valuing different ways in which students may express their knowledge have been successfully put into practice.

Table 6: The Preparations of Instructors toward inclusive Education Implementation

Variables	Mean	Interpretation
1. Delivery	3.83	Highly Prepared
2. Assessment	3.70	Highly Prepared
General Mean	3.77	Highly Prepared

Table 6 presents that instructors were highly prepared in terms of delivering content in a manner that caters to diverse student needs, backgrounds, and learning styles. Similarly, for the Assessment variable, it suggests that instructors were well-prepared in implementing inclusive assessment practices. This includes considerations for diverse assessment formats, recognizing various expressions of student

knowledge. Furthermore, instructors exhibited a high level of preparedness for inclusive education implementation. This further implies that a comprehensive and well-rounded approach, suggesting that instructors have effectively and actively taken steps to integrate inclusive practices both in content delivery and assessment methods within their teaching methodologies.

Table 7: The Challenges encountered of Instructors toward inclusive Education Implementation in terms of delivery

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
1. proactively search for resources and information.	2.20	Less Challenged
2. collaborate with peers to exchange best practices and innovative methods.	2.19	Less Challenged
3. integrate assistive technologies into their teaching methods.	2.22	Less Challenged
4. strive to create a variety of instructional materials and activities that enable students to express themselves.	2.20	Less Challenged
5. solicit feedback from students, placing value on their input to customize instructional approaches	1.65	Not Challenged
Over-all mean	2.09	Less Challenged

Table 7 present that instructors encountered fewer challenges in delivering content towards inclusive education. This implies that instructors have developed effective approaches and methods to overcome potential barriers in the delivery of content. They can adapt teaching strategies, utilize inclusive materials, and create an environment conducive to diverse

learning needs. This indicates a notable level of proficiency among instructors in navigating the complexities associated with inclusive education, fostering an environment where effective lesson delivery accommodates diverse student needs and backgrounds

Table 8: The Challenges encountered of Instructors toward inclusive Education Implementation in terms of assessment

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
My instructor...		
1. emphasizes the importance of self-assessment and reflection.	2.00	Less Challenged
2. engages in formative assessments throughout the teaching process.	1.63	Not Challenged
3. encourages peer assessment and collaborative activities.	1.63	Not Challenged
4. employs authentic assessments, such as project-based tasks and real-world scenarios.	1.39	Not Challenged
5. incorporates alternative assessment formats.	1.87	Less Challenged
Over-all mean	1.70	Less Challenged

Table 8 shows that instructors encountered fewer obstacles in implementing inclusive education, particularly in terms of assessment. Consequently, this implies that instructors can effectively adopt and assess students' performance. [15] critically examines that a focus on procedural justice within assessment may distract from broader opportunities to achieve justice in outcomes for both students and society.

Practical guidelines for inclusive assessment implementation are found in teaching and learning resources rather than peer-reviewed publications, particularly at the university level. Despite the existing valuable resources, there is a notable lack of studies on the design and implementation of inclusive assessment

Table 9: Summary of the Challenges Encountered of Instructors toward inclusive Education Implementation

Variables	Mean	Verbal Description	Interpretation
Delivery	2.09	Disagree	Less Challenged
Assessment	1.70	Disagree	Less Challenged
General Mean	1.90	Disagree	Less Challenged

Table 9 shows that the general mean of 1.90, described Disagree and interpreted Less Challenged, indicates an overall perception among instructors that they have encountered fewer challenges in implementing inclusive education practices. This implies a level of proficiency and

successful navigation of obstacles, fostering an environment where challenges related to both content delivery and assessment are perceived as relatively manageable in the context of inclusive education implementation.

Table 10: Significant Relationship between the level of implementation and preparations toward inclusive education

Variable 1	Variable 2	p-value	r-value	Decision	Interpretation
Level of Implementation of Inclusive Education	Instructors' Preparation	.022	.337	Rejected	Significant

Table 10 revealed that the level of implementation was correlated to instructors' preparation towards inclusive education ($p=value=.022$). The data described that there is a significant relationship which was lesser than the assumed alpha $\alpha=0.05$ level of significance. Therefore, the posited hypothesis that states that "There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation and instructors'

preparations toward inclusive education was rejected since the variables tested in the study were statistically correlated. This suggests that the level of implementation of inclusive education influences instructors' preparation. In essence, it implies that the extent to which instructors are prepared for inclusive education is dependent on the actual level of implementation observed in the learning environment

Table 11: Significant Relationship between the level of implementation and Challenges Encountered toward inclusive education

Variable 1	Variable 2	p-value	r-value	Decision	Interpretation
Level of Implementation of Inclusive Education	Challenges Encountered towards Inclusive Education	.208	-.189	Accepted	Not Significant

Table 11 revealed that the level of implementation was not correlated to instructors' challenges encountered towards inclusive education ($p=value=.208$). The data described that there is no significant relationship which was greater than the assumed alpha $\alpha=0.05$ level of significance. Therefore, the posited hypothesis that states that "There is no significant relationship between the level of implementation and instructors' challenges encountered toward inclusive education was accepted since the variables tested in the study were not statistically correlated. This means that, regardless of the level of implementation, instructors encountered the same challenges towards inclusive education. The data suggests that the challenges faced by instructors remained consistent across different levels of implementation of inclusive education practices. Whether the implementation was at a high or low level, the nature or type of challenges did not significantly differ. This insight implies that there are persistent and common obstacles that instructors confront in the context of inclusive education, and these challenges may not be entirely mitigated by the extent to which inclusive practices were implemented.

CONCLUSION

The instructors experienced fewer challenges related to inclusivity and demonstrated commendable dedication to fostering a truly inclusive learning atmosphere in the studied context. Furthermore, they exhibited a high level of preparedness for the implementation of inclusive education, actively integrating inclusive practices in both content delivery and assessment methods within their teaching methodologies. Additionally, they effectively managed challenges related to both content delivery and assessment, ensuring that inclusive education was smoothly integrated into their instructional approach. Moreover, the level of implementation of inclusive education significantly influenced instructors' preparation, indicating that their readiness depended on the actual level of implementation

observed in the learning environment. Despite this, the challenges faced by instructors remained consistent across different levels of inclusive education implementation. Whether the implementation was at a high or low level, the nature and type of challenges did not significantly differ, highlighting the presence of persistent and common obstacles that instructors confront in the context of inclusive education.

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