

FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the implementation of inclusive education among teachers at Prosperidad District Division of Agusan Del Sur. Guided by the Social Development theory, Ecological System Theory and Psychosocial Development theory. This research employed a descriptive-correlational design with a total of 46 teacher respondents across various schools who were selected through universal sampling. The data were collected through a validated survey questionnaire. The findings revealed that the teaching workforce is predominantly composed of experienced, mid-career female educators who are both academically qualified and practically equipped to meet the diverse needs of learners. These educators exhibit a strong awareness of inclusive practices and demonstrate a clear recognition of the importance of fostering cultural change within schools. The implementation of inclusive education within schools, revealing that while it is conceptually well-established in policies and programs, significant disparities remain in practice. Among the core components, the curriculum emerged as the most effectively implemented, reflecting schools' commitment to developing learning content that is flexible, culturally responsive, and accessible to all students. However, the findings also indicate that the moderate levels of implementation in areas such as teacher support and resource availability point to systemic weaknesses. Despite teachers' willingness to embrace inclusive practices, many lack access to the necessary professional development, instructional materials, and specialized assistance required to effectively meet diverse learner needs. The study found no significant relationship between teachers' awareness and the implementation of inclusive education policies across most domains, suggesting that other factors may influence effectiveness. However, a moderate positive correlation was observed in the domain of Monitoring and Evaluation, indicating that teacher awareness in this area contributes to more effective implementation. These findings emphasize the importance of continuous capacity-building, resource provision, and strong schools support in bridging the gap between inclusive education policies and their practical application, ensuring equitable learning opportunities.

Keyword: *Inclusive Education, Public School Teacher, Level of Awareness, Level of Implementation, Fostering Inclusivity*

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education seeks to provide equitable learning environments for all learners, but marginalized groups often face systemic barriers, prompting global and national efforts to prioritize inclusivity. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasizes inclusive education for all. In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10533 requires a learner-centered education system that is developmentally appropriate, adaptable to diverse needs, cognitive abilities, and cultural backgrounds, and ensures learners acquire essential competencies. This study investigates the challenges and successes of implementing inclusive education by identifying barriers, evaluating strategies, and exploring the experiences of teachers and learners. The findings aim to provide insights and recommendations to improve practices, policies, and school environments, promoting a more equitable educational system.

A positive school climate is essential for empowering teachers to implement inclusive education effectively. According to Xue et al. (2023), true inclusivity goes beyond policies it requires cultivating a school culture that values and supports diversity. Hidayat and Nuruzzaman (2024), who emphasize the importance of stakeholder involvement in making education more inclusive. They argue that inclusive education should be a shared responsibility among educators, parents, and community members, proposing specific strategies to strengthen partnerships among these groups. This collaborative approach is vital for building a supportive environment that responds to diverse student needs. Yet, Mucherah et al. (2024) also highlights parental attitudes as a key obstacle to successful inclusion. These insights underscore the pressing need for sustained, targeted professional development that equips educators with both the knowledge and confidence to embrace inclusive teaching. By fostering a positive disposition toward inclusivity, teachers can become catalysts for change, creating a more supportive and equitable classroom environment for all learners.

Despite the growing emphasis on inclusive education, there remains a significant gap in teacher preparedness and systemic support. Existing studies reveal that many teacher education programs inadequately address inclusive practices, leaving educators unaware or unprepared to meet the needs of diverse learners (Sasikala, 2023). Additionally, transformative strategies that foster positive attitudes toward inclusivity are often missing, contributing to a lack of confidence and capability among teachers. Compounding this issue, research highlights persistent structural challenges such as limited funding, inadequate materials, and a shortage of specialized personnel that further impede effective implementation (Zhou, 2024). These gaps indicate a critical need for more robust teacher training and systemic investment to ensure the successful integration of inclusive education in practice.

This study examines the implementation of inclusive education, focusing on the experiences of educators and marginalized learners. It aims to identify factors influencing inclusivity, address knowledge gaps, and highlight effective strategies to achieve equitable and impactful educational outcomes.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study draws from three key educational theories to support inclusive education: Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory. The theory of Social Development developed by Lev Vygotsky as cited by Buss, R., & Hawkes, M. (2023) emphasizes collaborative learning within the Zone of Proximal Development, suggesting that learners benefit from guided, culturally relevant instruction. Bronfenbrenner's theory as cited by Guy-Evans (2024), the Ecological System highlights how various environmental systems like family, school, and society impact a child's learning, underscoring the need to consider these layers in inclusive practices. Erikson's Psychosocial Development theory cited by Kivnick & Wells (2013), points to the psychological challenges of students may face, such as identity and trust issues, and stresses the importance of supportive school environments that build resilience and a sense of belonging. Together, these theories guide teachers in fostering inclusive, equitable, and respectful learning spaces.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is designed to explore the relationship between the level of awareness of the teachers and level of implementation of inclusive education. At its core, the framework examines how the teachers perceived inclusive education; teachers who are more aware about inclusive education can implement strategies that address the diverse needs of their students, ensuring equal opportunities for learning and growth. These variables are seen as key determinants in shaping teachers level of implementation by providing a systematic approach to improve inclusive education through a grounded understanding of the realities in the field, guided by national policy and laws.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the current implementation of inclusive education in the elementary setting, specifically in Prosperidad District, Division of Agusan del Sur, during the School Year 2024-2025.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Describe the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, years in teaching, grade level handles and highest educational attainment.
2. Assess the level of awareness on inclusive education as perceived by teachers in terms of system, support, cultural changes, partnership and monitoring and evaluation.
3. Evaluate the level of implementation in terms of policies and programs as perceived by teachers. In Policies it examines the legal and policy framework, teacher support, resources, monitoring and evaluation and curriculum. In terms of Programs it assesses the access and participation, inclusive learning environment, teacher and staff readiness, curriculum and assessment and policy and resource support.
4. Examine the significant relationship between the level of awareness and the level of implementation of policies and programs in promoting inclusive education.

2. METHODOLOGY

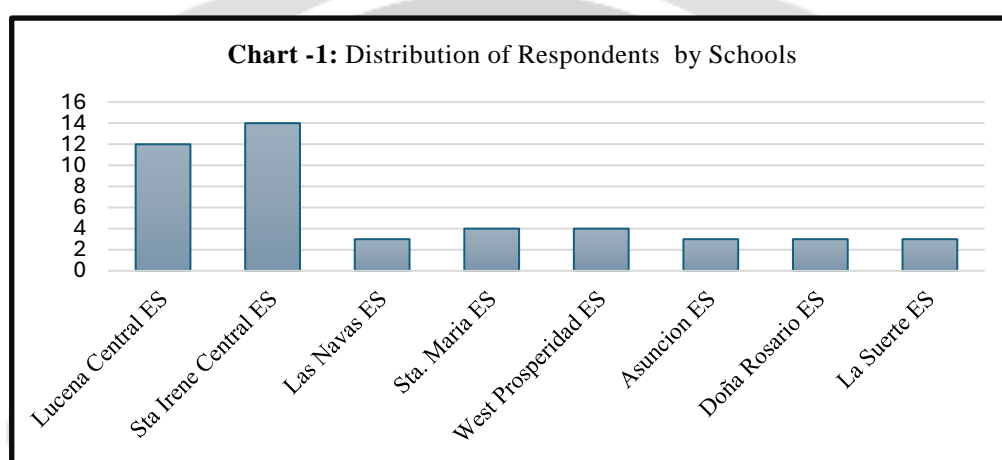
2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the implementation of inclusive education at various elementary schools in Prosperidad District. The descriptive components aim to determine the demographic profile of the respondents, the level of awareness and the level of implementation of inclusive education through the use of a modified survey questionnaire to collect quantifiable data, which be analyzed using statistical, mathematical, or computational methods (Bhat, 2020). The correlational aspect of the design seeks to establish the relationship between the level of awareness and its level of implementation such as system, support, cultural changes, partnership and monitoring and evaluation and legal and policy framework, teacher support, resources, monitoring and evaluation and curriculum, access and participation, inclusive learning environment, teacher and staff readiness, curriculum and assessment and policy and resource support.

This research design is appropriate for identifying patterns, describing existing conditions, and determining whether significant relationships exist among variables, without manipulating any of them. It provides a clear framework for understanding the factors that influence the implementation of inclusive education, thereby offering empirical evidence to inform policy development, teacher support systems, and instructional practices that promote equitable learning opportunities for teachers.

2.2 Research Respondents

This study involved a total of 46 teachers who are currently teaching Grades 4 to 6 across eight (8) elementary schools within the Prosperidad District, which is under the jurisdiction of the Division of Agusan del Sur. The selection of participants was carried out using the universal sampling method, wherein all eligible teachers within the specified grade levels and schools were included in the study to ensure comprehensive representation. These teachers were chosen based on their consistent and direct engagement with learners in the classroom setting, allowing them to provide valuable insights drawn from their daily interactions with students. Furthermore, they possess first-hand experience in the implementation of inclusive education practices, making them well-positioned to contribute relevant perspectives regarding the challenges, strategies, and effectiveness of inclusive education within their respective schools. Their experiences and observations serve as crucial data for understanding the practical realities of inclusive education at the upper elementary level.



2.3 Research Instruments

The primary research instrument utilized in this study was a modified-survey questionnaire. This instrument is designed to gather comprehensive data in the implementation of inclusive education. The research questionnaire consists of three (3) parts. Part one (1) is the demographic profile which is designed to collect essential demographic information from teacher-respondents, including gender, age, years of teaching experience, grade level handled, and educational attainment. This data is crucial for understanding the context of their responses and for segmenting the data during analysis. Part two (2) is on the Level of Awareness on Inclusive Education. The questionnaire being used in this part is modified and patterned from the study of Sirem (2022) titled: An analysis of classroom teachers' awareness of inclusive education. It emphasizes and investigates the level of awareness of teachers and learner's respondents in implementing inclusive education using the five (5) domains from a framework which was adapted from UNICEF (2017). Part three (3) of the questionnaire, patterned from Prof. Peter Oracha Adoyo's 2019 study on inclusive education practices in Siaya County, Kenya, which evaluates the level of implementation of inclusive education by teachers and learners. The data collected will help identify effective strategies and areas for improvement in implementing inclusive education.

To ensure validity, the instruments underwent expert review and pilot testing, resulting in revisions for clarity and relevance. Reliability was established through inter-rater calibration using standardized scoring procedures, targeting a Cronbach's alpha of ≥ 0.70 to ensure consistency and accuracy in assessment outcomes.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained approval from educational authorities, beginning with the school's division superintendent, through a letter requesting permission to research in selected elementary schools in the Prosperidad District. Once approved, the permission letter was forwarded to the respective school principals for authorization. For data collection, the researcher distributed the survey questionnaires to 46 teachers who are teaching and practicing inclusive education. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires during meetings or after class to minimize disruption. The gathered data was summarized and analyzed to evaluate the awareness and implementation of inclusive education.

2.5 Statistical Treatment of Data

After collecting the data, the researcher employed the following statistical methods: Frequency Count and Percentage this was used to determine each item in the survey questionnaire's relative importance of each. Weightings are to give due importance to each item in the survey questionnaire and determine the descriptive ratings. This method was utilized to treat data for problem 1 on the profile of the respondents. Weighted Mean and Mean, this were used to determine each item in the survey questionnaire's relative importance of each. Weightings are to give due importance to each item in the survey questionnaire and determine the descriptive ratings. This was utilized to treat data for problems 2 and 3 on the level of awareness on inclusive education as perceived by the two groups of respondents and the level of implementation of policies and programs in promoting inclusive education as perceived by the two groups of respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section delves into the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the following data on challenges and success in implementing inclusive education for marginalized learners across the selected schools in Prosperidad District, Division of Agusan del Sur.

3.1 The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table -1: The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category		Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	12	26
	Female	30	65
	Prefer not to say	4	9
	Total	46	100
Age	55-64	7	15
	35-54	24	52
	25-34	11	24
	Under 25	4	9
	Total	46	100
Years in Teaching	21 years and above	12	26
	16-20 years	6	13
	11-15 years	13	28
	6-10 years	12	26
	0-5 years	3	7
	Total	46	100
Grade Level handled	Grade 6	17	37
	Grade 5	14	30
	Grade 4	15	33
	Total	46	100
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	20	43
	MA/MS	22	48
	EdD/PhD	4	9
	Total	46	100

The table 1 shows that the majority of the teachers are female 30 out of 46 (65%) with the prevailing trend in the teaching profession, particularly at the elementary level, where women typically make up the majority of the workforce (UNESCO 2020). Predominantly fall within the 35-54 age range (52%) indicating that the majority of teachers are in their mid-career stage. Mostly, they are in teaching for 16–20, (28%) years' experience indicating a group of educators with substantial experience and expertise, likely capable of adapting to various teaching methods and educational changes and handling grade 6 learners with (37%), most of them have master's degree (48%) demonstrating that the majority of the teaching staff have pursued advanced education beyond a bachelor's degree.

Indicators	Teacher	
	Mean	Adjectival Rating
System	4.45	Very Aware
Support	4.40	Very Aware
Cultural Change	4.48	Very Aware
Partnership	4.39	Very Aware
Monitoring and Evaluation	4.34	Very Aware
Over-all Mean	4.41	Very Aware

3.2 Level of Awareness in Implementing Inclusive Education

Table 2: Level of Awareness in Implementing Inclusive Education

The data presents the level of awareness of teachers across five key indicators: System, Support, Cultural Change, Partnership, and Monitoring and Evaluation. Overall, teachers demonstrated a higher level of awareness, with all their mean scores falling within the Very Aware category. This suggests that teachers are well-informed and actively engaged in implementing inclusive education practices. Among the indicators, Cultural Change received the highest

rating from teachers (4.48), indicating a strong awareness and recognition of the importance of transforming mindsets, attitudes, and school culture to support diversity, equity, and inclusion. It indicates a recognition that fostering an inclusive environment goes beyond everyday practices.

The lowest rating among teachers was in Monitoring and Evaluation (4.34), though still within the Very Aware range, suggesting that while teachers are generally knowledgeable in this area, it may benefit from further strengthening. The level of awareness about inclusive education among teachers is shaped by a combination of formal training, classroom experience, and social factors such as gender roles.

Teachers typically build this awareness through structured pre-service and in-service training programs that provide both theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to implement inclusive practices effectively (Zaborniak-Sobczak, 2022; Gülay & Altun, 2023). These programs emphasize that inclusive education goes beyond simply providing access it aims to ensure meaningful participation and engagement for all marginalized learners within the classroom environment.

3.3 Level of Implementation of Policies and Programs

Table 3: Level of Implementation of Policies and Programs

Indicators	Teacher	
	Mean	Adjectival Rating
POLICIES		
Legal and Policy Framework	4.33	Highly Implemented
Teacher Support	4.15	Moderately Implemented
Resources	4.12	Moderately Implemented
Monitoring and Evaluation	4.36	Highly Implemented
Curriculum	4.47	Highly Implemented
Sub-Mean	4.29	Highly Implemented
PROGRAMS		
Access and Participation	4.59	Highly Implemented
Inclusive Learning Environment	4.57	Highly Implemented
Teacher and Staff Readiness	4.41	Highly Implemented
Curriculum and Assessment	4.49	Highly Implemented
Policy and Resource Support	4.45	Highly Implemented
Sub-Mean	4.50	Highly Implemented
Over-all Mean	4.39	Highly Implemented

As displayed in the table, it presents the level of implementation of inclusive education policies and programs as perceived by teachers. In terms of policies in inclusive education, the highest rated component is Curriculum, with a mean of 4.47, categorized as Highly Implemented. This suggests that teachers clearly see the curriculum as aligned with the goals of inclusive education. It indicates that schools are successfully integrating inclusive practices into their teaching practices. A curriculum designed this way is likely adaptable, culturally sensitive, and capable of meeting the diverse needs. It ensures that learners, regardless of their background or abilities, have equal access to educational content and opportunities to participate fully.

However, Teacher Support (4.13) and Resources (4.08) received the lowest ratings under policies, both falling under Moderately Implemented. The results indicate that although inclusive education policies are well-designed, their implementation falls short, particularly in providing adequate support and resources to effectively serve marginalized learners. While some tools and support systems are available, they are often limited in scope and accessibility, making it difficult to meet the diverse needs. There must be a stronger investment in accessible educational resources and ongoing teacher training, ensuring that inclusive education moves beyond policy into meaningful, classroom-level practice.

Looking at the programs in implementing inclusive education, all five components were rated as Highly Implemented with over all mean of 4.39. The highest among them is Access and Participation with a mean of 4.59. Continuous adaptations and targeted programming are essential in guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for all learners, particularly those facing significant learning challenges. To support this goal, schools establish enabling structures such as inclusive resources, and responsive support systems (Miyauchi et al., 2022). The high implementation of

access and participation in schools indicates that schools are actively removing barriers whether physical or social that may hinder learners engagement. Through such deliberate and sustained efforts, schools are not only promoting access to education but also ensuring that all students can meaningfully participate and thrive within inclusive learning environments.

3.4 Correlation between level of Awareness and Level of Implementation of Policies and Programs

Table 4: Significant correlation between level of Awareness and Level of Implementation of Policies and Programs

Variable Tested		Computed r	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
System	Policy	0.02	0.89	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Programs	0.00	0.99	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Support	Policy	0.11	0.45	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Programs	0.05	0.76	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Cultural Change	Policy	0.16	0.28	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Programs	0.18	0.44	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Partnership	Policy	0.22	0.14	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
	Programs	0.11	0.48	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	Policy	0.32	0.03	Reject Ho	Significant
	Programs	0.06	0.68	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant

There is no significant relationship between teachers' level of awareness and the implementation of inclusive education policies and programs across most domains. Specifically, the System, Support, Cultural Change, and Partnership both in terms of policy and program implementation were low and their corresponding p-values were greater than 0.05. This suggests that teachers' awareness in these areas does not significantly influence how they implement related policies and programs. This finding implies that other factors, beyond just awareness, could be influencing the effectiveness of policy and program implementation. It highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach that includes not only raising awareness but also enhancing support systems, promoting organizational and cultural changes within schools, and fostering strong partnerships between stakeholders.

However, an exception was found in the domain of Monitoring and Evaluation in Policy, where a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.32$, $p = 0.029$) was observed. Teachers with moderate to high levels of awareness of inclusive education policies are more likely to follow the monitoring and evaluation frameworks embedded within these policies (Gulam, 2025). Such awareness equips them with the knowledge of key indicators and evaluation procedures needed to assess the progress of learners with diverse needs. Gulam (2025) emphasizes that this level of awareness forms the basis for both the effective implementation and ongoing monitoring of inclusive education practices. In this context, teachers not only carry out policy directives but also play an active role in tracking student progress and making timely, data-informed adjustments to better meet individual learning needs. This result implies that when teachers are more aware of monitoring and evaluation policies, they are more likely to implement them effectively. It underscores the importance of strengthening awareness campaigns and training specifically tied to monitoring processes to improve implementation outcomes.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes the teaching workforce is largely composed of experienced, mid-career female educators who possess a strong combination of academic qualifications and hands-on expertise. Their advanced educational attainment and extensive years of service reflect their capacity to deliver effective instruction while adapting to the evolving demands of inclusive education. With their rich professional experience and deep understanding of learners' diverse needs, especially at the upper elementary level, these teachers are well-positioned to implement innovative teaching strategies and foster an inclusive learning environment. This demographic composition highlights their vital role as key agents in promoting, sustaining, and enhancing inclusive education initiatives within the school system.

Moreover, the findings indicate that teachers are well-prepared and well-positioned to support inclusive education, as reflected in their high level of awareness across all key indicators. Their strong recognition of the need for cultural change demonstrates a clear readiness to challenge traditional norms and actively embrace diversity within the school community. While these insights affirm that the foundation for inclusive education is firmly established, the success of such initiatives ultimately hinges on the ability of schools and education systems to transform teacher awareness into consistent, measurable, and sustainable practices. Ensuring this alignment between awareness and actual practice remains a critical step toward fully realizing the goals of inclusive education.

It can be concluded that while inclusive education is conceptually well-established within school policies and programs, its actual implementation continues to face significant challenges. Among the key components, the curriculum emerges as the most effectively implemented, reflecting schools' meaningful efforts to develop flexible, culturally responsive, and accessible learning content for all students. However, notable gaps remain, particularly in the areas of teacher support and resource availability. Despite teachers' willingness to adopt inclusive practices, many are constrained by limited access to professional development opportunities, adequate instructional materials, and specialized support services. These shortcomings highlight critical systemic weaknesses that must be addressed to fully realize the goals of inclusive education and ensure equitable learning experiences for all students.

The study concludes that while teachers' awareness of inclusive education policies does not significantly impact the implementation of these policies in most domains, it is crucial for the successful application of monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Teachers who are aware of these processes are more likely to use them effectively to track student progress and adjust teaching strategies. Therefore, the study recommends strengthening awareness campaigns and providing targeted training on monitoring and evaluation processes. Additionally, a comprehensive approach that includes enhancing support systems, fostering organizational and cultural change, and building stronger partnerships among stakeholders is necessary to improve the overall implementation of inclusive education policies and programs.

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