# Bridging Perspectives: General and Special Educators on Inclusive Learning Strategies

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## Abstract

This study examined the attitudes of General Education and Special Education (SPED) teachers in handling learners with special educational needs (SEN). Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study assessed teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and their willingness to implement instructional strategies that support diverse learners. Findings revealed that both General Education and SPED teachers hold positive attitudes toward inclusive education, with SPED teachers exhibiting slightly higher attitude scores. However, statistical analysis indicated no significant difference between the two groups (p = 0.479), suggesting a shared perspective on the inclusion of learners with disabilities. Key indicators such as the elimination of separate classrooms, mentoring from experienced educators, and fostering a welcoming classroom environment were rated positively by both groups. Despite the favorable attitudes, challenges such as limited resources, lack of professional training, and concerns about workload may hinder effective implementation. These findings align with previous research emphasizing that teacher preparedness and institutional support are critical factors in the success of inclusive education. The study recommends continuous professional development programs, collaborative learning opportunities, and enhanced institutional support to strengthen teachers' abilities in managing inclusive classrooms. Addressing these factors will improve the overall effectiveness of inclusive education and support the academic and social development of learners with SEN.

**Keywords:** Classroom Inclusion, General Education, Inclusive education, Special Educational Needs, SPED Teachers, Teacher Attitudes.

## 1. Introduction

Education is a human right that guarantees everyone access to learning, regardless of background or skill (Cole, 2022). The educational system has undergone numerous adjustments to provide inclusive, high-quality education for diverse learners (Price & Slee, 2021). Over time, several strategic changes have improved literacy, numeracy, and support for diverse learners, including those with special needs (Edward-Fapohunda, 2024). These changes improve equity, accessibility, and inclusivity to ensure that all children receive the education they need for personal and academic development (Theoharis, 2024).

Despite efforts to promote an inclusive and equitable education system, special education students face several hurdles. For instance, both general and special education teachers struggle to adapt instructional tactics, manage various learning behaviors, and get sufficient resources to serve these children (Hermanto & Pamungkas, 2023). Inclusion is hindered by a lack of specialized training, learning resources, and educator-support service collaboration (Khoboko, 2023). Classrooms are overcrowded, making it hard to give special needs students individualized attention (Yuwono & Okech, 2021). These issues underscore the gap between policy and practice, emphasizing the need for focused interventions, teacher training, and institutional support to give all kids the education they deserve (Klara et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, Special Education (SPED) has encountered significant obstacles, including a lack of financing, a scarcity of SPED teachers, obsolete curricula, inadequate facilities, and insufficient support from school leadership, despite these efforts (Gaytos et al., 2020). Parents of children who are developing normally expressed concerns about the inclusion of kids with special educational needs, which further emphasized the necessity for improved support systems in schools (Toquero, 2021). The current emphasis on a lack of resources frequently fails

to take into account the experiences and difficulties that instructors encounter, even if these are essential to providing teaching (Napanoy et al., 2021). As a result, it was deemed essential to comprehend the viewpoints of both general and special education teachers when it comes to working with children who have special educational needs in order to enhance the quality of education that is offered to these learners.

**Table 1.** Age and Gender of the Respondents.

| Age (in years) | Female | | Male | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| 55 and above | 4 | 20.00 | 2 | 10.00 | 6 | 30.00 |
| 45-54 | 4 | 20.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 20.00 |
| 35-44 | 7 | 35.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 7 | 35.00 |
| 25-34 | 3 | 15.00 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 15 |
| Total | 18 | 90.00 | 2 | 10.00 | 20 | 100.00 |

Recent figures showed that a large number of Filipino children lived with disabilities, highlighting the importance of meeting the needs of pupils who require special education (Lee et al., 2024). However, not much emphasis has been paid to the viewpoints of instructors, who were crucial in helping these pupils develop academically, socially, and emotionally. As a result, this research aimed to address this gap by investigating the perspectives and experiences of both general and special education teachers in their interactions with children who have special educational needs. The main goal of special education was to offer individualized educational support to students who were experiencing a range of learning challenges. The study sought to identify areas for improvement and develop focused interventions to enhance the quality of instruction and assistance provided to students with special educational needs by understanding the views of instructors. The purpose of this study was to better understand the difficulties that teachers encounter and the possible advantages of taking their viewpoints into account, with the ultimate goal of improving the special education sector as a whole. The goal of this study was to investigate the viewpoints of general and special education teachers about the management of students with special educational needs, as well as to determine the difficulties and areas that require improvement in the support system. The results of this study gave important information about the experiences of teachers, which might be used to build policies, create teacher training programs, and implement support systems in schools.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Research shows that teachers' attitudes greatly impact SEN students' mainstream classroom integration. Berry (2010) revealed that good teacher attitudes towards inclusion improve SEN kids' academic and social results. Due to insufficient training and resources, general education teachers often feel unprepared to handle inclusive classrooms, leading to fewer positive attitudes towards inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Due to their expertise and experience with SEN kids, special education teachers tend to be more positive (Monsen et al., 2014).

Effective inclusion requires general and special education teacher collaboration. Scruggs et al. (2007) found that shared accountability and support in co-teaching models improve instructor inclusion attitudes. However, job uncertainty and lack of collaborative planning time can hamper partnerships (Friend et al., 2010). Teacher attitudes and inclusive education success can be improved through professional development and structural support. Self-efficacy, perceived support, and SEN experience affect teacher attitudes. Teachers that are more self-confident use inclusive practices (Sharma et al., 2012). Administrative assistance and resources also improve teacher inclusion attitudes (Weisel & Dror, 2006). Positive experiences with SEN students help improve attitudes, emphasising the value of exposure and interaction in teacher training programmes (Campbell et al., 2003).

## 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides an overview of the age and gender distribution among the teacher respondents. It presents the number and percentage of female and male respondents across different age brackets. Among the respondents aged 55 and above, there were 4 females, accounting for 20.00%, and 2 males, representing 10.00% of the total respondents in this age group. In the 45-54 age bracket, there were 4 female respondents, constituting 20.00% of the total, while no male respondents fell into this category. In the age group of 35-44, the majority of respondents were female, with 7 respondents accounting for 35.00% of the total. There were no male respondents in this age bracket. Similarly, in the 25-34 age group, there were 3 female respondents, making up 15.00% of the total, with no male respondents. Overall, the table indicates that the majority of respondents were female across all age brackets. The highest number of respondents was in the 35-44 age group, with 7 female respondents.

**Table 2.** Highest educational attainment of the respondents.

| Educational attainment | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| With Doctorate units | 1 | 5.00 |
| Master's Graduate | 5 | 25.00 |
| With Master's units | 13 | 65.00 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 1 | 5.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00 |

Table 2 displays the highest educational attainment of the teacher respondents, with the data presented in terms of frequency and percentage. Among the respondents, one individual or 5.00 percent has completed Doctorate Units, indicating a significant level of academic achievement. The majority of respondents, comprising five individuals or 25.00 percent, are Master's Graduates, suggesting a considerable portion of the sample has attained postgraduate education. Furthermore, thirteen respondents or 65.00 percent have completed Master's Units, indicating a substantial number of individuals who have pursued advanced studies beyond their Bachelor's Degree but have not yet obtained a Master's degree. Additionally, one respondent or 5.00 percent holds a

Bachelor's Degree as their highest educational attainment. Overall, the data suggest that a significant proportion of the teacher respondents have pursued or completed postgraduate education, with a majority having attained Master's level qualifications or units. This indicates a commitment to professional development and a potential for a higher level of expertise among the respondents.

**Table 3.** Length of service of the respondents.

| Length of service (In years) | f | % |
|---|---|---|
| 16 and above | 8 | 40.00 |
| 11-15 | 8 | 40.00 |
| 6-10 | 4 | 20.00 |
| Total | 20 | 100.00 |

Table 3 presents the length of service of the teacher respondents, with the data provided in terms of frequency and percentage. Among the respondents, eight individuals or 40.00 percent have a length of service of 16 years and above, indicating a significant portion of the sample has considerable experience in teaching. Similarly, another eight respondents or 40.00 percent have served for 11 to 15 years, reflecting a substantial number of individuals with a moderate level of experience in the field of education. Four respondents or 20.00 percent have a length of service ranging from 6 to 10 years, suggesting a smaller but still notable proportion of the sample with relatively fewer years of teaching experience. Overall, the data suggest a diverse range of teaching experience among the respondents.

**Table 4.** Level of attitudes of general education teachers in handling learners with special educational needs.

| S/N | Indicators | WM | VD |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1* | Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated. | 4.10 | Positive |
| 2 | Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classes with non-disabled students because they will not require too much of the teacher's time. | 3.40 | Neutral |
| 3 | Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms. | 3.20 | Neutral |
| 4 | I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction. | 4.40 | Very positive |
| 5 | I want to emulate teachers who know how to design appropriate academic interventions. | 4.50 | Very positive |
| 6 | I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in the regular education classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success. | 4.10 | Positive |
| 7 | I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with mild to moderate disabilities. | 3.80 | Positive |
| 8 | Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom. | 4.20 | Positive |
| 9 | All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible | 3.70 | Positive |
| | Aggregate Weighted Mean | 3.93 | Positive |

Table 4 provides an insight into the level of attitudes among general education teachers regarding the handling of learners with special educational needs. Indicator 1 suggests a positive attitude among general education teachers, with a weighted mean of 4.10, indicating a favorable perception towards the elimination of separate classrooms exclusively for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Indicator 2 reflects a neutral attitude, with a weighted mean of 3.40. This suggests that while teachers do not strongly oppose the integration of students with disabilities into regular classes, they also do not believe it will significantly impact their workload. Indicator 4 and 5 demonstrate very positive attitudes among teachers, with weighted means of 4.40 and 4.50, respectively. These indicators indicate a strong desire among teachers to learn from mentors who employ effective instructional strategies and to emulate educators skilled in designing appropriate interventions. Indicators 6, 7, and 8 also exhibit positive attitudes, with weighted means ranging from 3.80 to 4.20. These findings suggest a belief among teachers in the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms and their ability to create a welcoming environment for students with disabilities. Finally, Indicator 9, with a weighted mean of 3.70, underscores a positive attitude towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms to the fullest extent possible. The aggregate weighted mean for all indicators is 3.93, indicating an overall positive attitude among general education teachers towards handling learners with special educational needs.

**Table 5.** Level of attitudes of SPED teachers in handling learners with special educational needs.

| S/N | Indicators | WM | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1* | Most or all separate classrooms that exclusively serve students with mild to moderate disabilities should be eliminated. | 3.70 | Positive |
| 2 | Students with mild to moderate disabilities should be taught in regular classes with non- disabled students because they will not require too much of the teacher's time. | 3.10 | Neutral |
| 3 | Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be more effectively educated in regular classrooms as opposed to special education classrooms. | 3.60 | Positive |
| 4 | I would like to be mentored by a teacher who models effective differentiated instruction. | 4.70 | Very Positive |
| 5 | I want to emulate teachers who know how to design appropriate academic interventions. | 4.60 | Very Positive |
| 6 | I believe including students with mild/moderate disabilities in the regular education classrooms is effective because they can learn the social skills necessary for success. | 4.60 | Very Positive |
| 7 | I would like people to think that I can create a welcoming classroom environment for students with mild to moderate disabilities. | 4.40 | Very Positive |
| 8 | Students with mild to moderate disabilities can be trusted with responsibilities in the classroom. | 4.40 | Very Positive |
| 9 | All students with mild to moderate disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms with non-handicapped peers to the fullest extent possible | 4.20 | Positive |
| | Aggregate Weighted Mean | 4.14 | Positive |

Table 5 provides insights into the level of attitudes among Special Education (SPED) teachers regarding the handling of learners with special educational needs. The table presents various indicators along with their Weighted Means (WM) and corresponding verbal descriptions. Indicator 1 demonstrates a positive attitude among SPED teachers, with a weighted mean of 3.70, indicating a favorable perception towards the elimination of separate classrooms exclusively for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Indicator 2 reflects a neutral attitude, with a weighted mean of 3.10. This suggests that SPED teachers are indifferent to the idea of students with disabilities being taught in regular classes with non-disabled students. Indicators 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 indicate very positive attitudes among SPED teachers, with weighted means ranging from 4.40 to 4.70. These indicators suggest a strong desire among SPED teachers to learn from effective mentors and to emulate educators skilled in designing appropriate interventions. Additionally, they express a belief in the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms and their ability to create a welcoming environment for students with disabilities. Indicator 9, with a weighted mean of 4.20, underscores a positive attitude towards the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classrooms to the fullest extent possible. The aggregate weighted mean for all indicators is 4.14, indicating an overall positive attitude among SPED teachers towards handling learners with special educational needs.

**Table 6.** Test of difference on the attitudes of general education and sped teachers in handling learners with special educational needs

| Source of Difference | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean Difference | Computed t- value | p-value | Decision | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| General Education Teachers | 35.40 | 7.35 | -1.90 | -0.722 | 0.479 | Do not reject Ho | Not Significant |
| SPED Teachers | 37.30 | 3.89 | | | | | |

Note:    *significant at p<0.05.

Table 6 presents the results of a test of significant difference between the attitudes of General Education (Gen Ed) teachers and Special Education (SPED) teachers in handling learners with special educational needs using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The table displays the mean scores for each group, indicating the average level of attitude towards handling these learners. The mean attitude score for General Education teachers is 35.40 with a standard deviation of 7.35, while computed mean for SPED teachers, it is 37.30 with a standard deviation of 3.89. These mean scores suggest that, on average, SPED teachers have slightly higher attitudes towards handling learners with special educational needs compared to General Education teachers. The perception of the two respondent-groups has a mean difference of -1.90 with a computed t-value of -0.722 and a p-value equal to 0.479 which is almost equal to 0.05 significance level. The results suggest that the null hypothesis is not rejected, which means that there is no significant difference in attitudes towards handling learners with special educational needs between General Education and SPED teachers.

## 4. Discussion

The results show that General Education and Special Education (SPED) instructors support inclusive education for students with special needs. This supports earlier studies demonstrating teachers foster inclusivity. A comprehensive review indicated that primary school teachers are indifferent to positive towards inclusive education. While some researches are positive, others are ambivalent or concerned about implementing inclusive approaches. The p-value of 0.479 implies that General Education and SPED teachers share an inclusive view. Research indicates that teacher attitudes towards inclusion are influenced by factors like perceived support and self-efficacy. The benefits of inclusive education, such as improved social skills and reduced stigma for students with impairments, may explain both groups' positive sentiments. Inclusive education relies on teacher attitudes, support, resources, and professional development to meet the different needs of all students.

## 5. Conclusion

The study found that both General Education and Special Education (SPED) instructors are pleased about working with special needs students. The study of weighted means showed that instructors value inclusive education for cultivating social skills, creating a welcoming learning environment, and implementing academic interventions. SPED teachers had somewhat higher attitude scores than General Education teachers, but the difference was not statistically significant, showing that both groups view inclusion similarly. These findings demonstrate the growing acceptability of inclusive education and its potential benefits for disabled students. Positive attitudes aside, teacher preparedness, resource access, and institutional support are crucial to implementation. Studies show that effective professional development, mentoring, and administrative support boost teachers' inclusive practice confidence. Teachers must receive ongoing training and collaborative learning opportunities to improve their ability to work with diverse learners. Stronger teacher education programs and classroom support will sustain inclusive education and improve special education students' learning experiences.

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