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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION INITIATIVES: A NARRATIVE EXPOSITIONS OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT
Inclusive education, as a philosophy and practice, has been gaining prominence in educational systems around the world. It represents a fundamental shift in the way we perceive and accommodate the diverse needs of students within mainstream classrooms. This study employed qualitative research as the method to Evaluate the Efficacy of Inclusive Education Initiatives at Sta. Maria Integrated School. A qualitative phenomenological study employing in-depth interviews was the design used for this undertaking. Phenomenology searches for the meaning or essence of an experience rather than measurements or explanations. The research participants will be the eight (8) General Education Teachers who are employed Sta. Maria Integrated School. They will be responsible for instructing students in inclusive classrooms can provide information on teaching methods, curriculum adaptations, and their perceptions of inclusive education. significant finding relates to the challenges faced by teachers due to the lack of specialized training in inclusive education. Many educators expressed feeling overwhelmed by the need to individualize instruction and support for each student, particularly without adequate preparation during their pre-service education programs. This underscores the importance of continuous professional development and support to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage diversity in inclusive classrooms. Teachers should advocate for inclusive policies and practices at the school, district, and systemic levels to create supportive environments for all students. This may involve participating in school leadership teams, policy development committees, or advocacy campaigns focused on issues such as inclusive curriculum design, equitable access to resources, and anti-discrimination policies. By amplifying their voices and collaborating with stakeholders across the education system, teachers can drive positive change and promote inclusivity for all learners.

KEYWORDS: *Inclusive Education Initiatives, Narrative Expositions*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education, as a philosophy and practice, has been gaining prominence in educational systems around the world. It represents a fundamental shift in the way we perceive and accommodate the diverse needs of students within mainstream classrooms. At the heart of inclusive education lies the belief that every child, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or background, has the right to access quality education in a supportive and inclusive environment.

The application of inclusive education principles in basic education schools is of particular significance, as it marks the formative years of a child's educational journey. These early experiences can have a profound and lasting impact on a child's development, self-esteem, and future academic success. Therefore, it becomes imperative to assess the effectiveness of inclusive education practices in basic education schools to ensure that they are meeting their intended goals and providing the best possible learning experiences for all students.
Moreover, Inclusive education initiatives are designed to benefit a wide range of stakeholders, with the primary beneficiaries being the students and teachers directly involved in the educational process. It fosters social integration by allowing students with disabilities to interact with their peers in a regular classroom setting, which helps build friendships and social skills. Studies have shown that students with disabilities often perform better academically in inclusive settings due to higher expectations and access to a broader curriculum.

In the pursuit of creating equitable educational opportunities for all learners, inclusive education has emerged as a pivotal paradigm shift within the field of education. Rooted in the principles of equality, diversity, and social justice, inclusive education aims to provide students with disabilities or special educational needs access to the same

educational experiences and opportunities as their typically developing peers (UNESCO, 2009). The adoption of inclusive practices in basic education schools has garnered increasing attention and endorsement from educational policymakers and practitioners alike (Hornby, 2016). This approach signifies a transformative endeavor that holds the potential to redefine the educational landscape for children at their most impressionable stage of development.

At the core of the inclusive education philosophy is the belief that students of all abilities benefit from learning alongside one another in a heterogeneous classroom environment (Salend, 2016). However, the mere presence of students with diverse needs within mainstream classrooms does not guarantee the achievement of inclusive education's fundamental objectives. It is imperative to rigorously assess the effectiveness of these practices to ascertain whether they genuinely result in improved academic outcomes, foster social integration, and promote the holistic development of all students.

In China they promote inclusive education for various reasons. It offers equal opportunities, improved learning outcomes, reduced stigma, and prepared students for the workforce. Inclusive classrooms help students with disabilities develop social and emotional skills, while complying with international standards. However, challenges remain, such as teacher training, resource allocation, and changing attitudes about disability. To address these, China should invest in comprehensive training programs, increase resource allocation, and promote public awareness campaigns. By promoting inclusive education, China can ensure a brighter future for all students and foster a more equitable society (Xiaguang, 2019).

Particularly, Mashkin. (2021) stated that the Inclusive education faces challenges in standardization, a results-oriented approach, and teacher-student relationships. To improve, standardized guidelines should be implemented, valuing the ongoing development and learning process, and providing support and training for teachers to build strong, positive relationships with students. This will help ensure consistent quality and reduce stress in inclusive classrooms.

Also, Kappen (2020) stated that Inclusive education is the practice of teaching children with disabilities in regular classrooms alongside non-disabled peers to the fullest extent possible. It emphasizes the child's right to participate and be included in all aspects of school life. Unlike previous approaches such as integration and mainstreaming, inclusive education is not just about placing children with disabilities in regular classrooms but also ensuring they receive the support and accommodations needed to thrive academically and socially. This approach advocates for systemic changes in teaching methods, curriculum, and school policies to create a truly inclusive environment for all students.

On the other hand, in Cebu City, Inclusive education requires progressive teacher education, emphasizing the importance of preparing educators to effectively support all students. Collaboration among stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, is essential for successful inclusive education. Teachers are increasingly engaging in continuing professional development, adopting inclusive policies, and integrating innovative instructional practices to promote inclusivity. However, they face obstacles such as insufficient training and expertise in special education, a lack of educational resources, and broader social contexts that impact their teaching efforts (Cabanilla, 2023).

Additionally, Mirador (2022) emphasized that the school climate in the Philippines significantly influences the instructional leadership of Asatidz coordinators in inclusive education. A positive school climate fosters effective leadership, while professional development and access to instructional resources are crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education programs. The effectiveness of Asatidz coordinators' instructional leadership is dependent on the school climate, and the availability of ongoing professional development and adequate instructional resources directly impacts the implementation and success of these programs.
Meanwhile in the Philippines recognizes the importance of fostering inclusive values from a young age. Inclusive education is integrated into the kindergarten curriculum through various concepts and expressions, emphasizing unity, social competency, and promoting inclusive values among students. For instance, kindergarten lessons might incorporate themes of friendship and cooperation, where children from diverse backgrounds work together. By using these strategies, teachers equip their students with the social and emotional skills needed to thrive in inclusive classrooms (Raguindin, 2020).

Positive understanding and attitudes toward people with disabilities are fostered at Mapua Institute of Technology in the Philippines, (Sacdalan, 2019). This is evident through the collaboration and strong support for inclusive education shown by students, teachers, and administration. While challenges exist, such as ensuring accessible buildings and allocating sufficient budget for support services, a spirit of cooperation prevails. This collaborative effort allows students with disabilities to thrive, providing them with access to academic resources and opportunities to participate fully in campus life.

Maria (2020) states that the partnership between the government and stakeholders is significant in promoting inclusive education and protecting indigenous cultural rights. Culturally-appropriate education has a positive impact on the cultural rights of indigenous communities, such as the Ayta. When the government collaborates with local stakeholders, it ensures that educational practices respect and preserve the unique cultural heritage of the Ayta, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

In Davao del Norte, Bongabong et al. (2022) based on the results, it is implied that the Department of Education (DepEd), school administrators, General Education kindergarten teachers, Special Education (SpEd) teachers, and parents must demonstrate a sincere commitment to the implementation and continuous improvement of inclusive education (IE). This dedication is particularly crucial at the kindergarten level, where diverse young learners require robust support to succeed in an inclusive classroom environment.
This research embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the effectiveness of inclusive education in basic education schools, aiming to provide empirical insights into its impact on the academic achievements, social interactions, and overall educational experiences of students with and without disabilities. By undertaking this assessment, we aspire to offer a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of inclusive education, its successes, challenges, and the critical role it plays in shaping the future of education for all children.

Inclusive education offers numerous benefits to students with disabilities, developing students, and society as a whole. It ensures equal opportunity and equity, improving learning outcomes through observation, interaction, and collaboration. It reduces stigma and increases acceptance by fostering understanding and acceptance of differences. Inclusive education prepares students with disabilities for the modern workplace, equipping them with social and communication skills to navigate diverse teams and build strong relationships. It also fosters social and emotional development, allowing students to cooperate, build friendships, manage emotions, and practice empathy and respect.

Research Questions
The purpose of this study is to assess how well inclusive education strategies work in basic education schools. It will evaluate learning outcomes, social and emotional growth, obstacles and difficulties, and best practices. It specifically seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of the basic education teachers towards Inclusive Education?
2. How do basic education teachers cope up with the challenges of inclusive education practices?
3. What are the lessons and insights derived from the experiences of the basic education Teachers towards Inclusive Education?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design
This study employed qualitative research as the method to Evaluate the Efficacy of Inclusive Education Initiatives at Sta. Maria Integrated School. A qualitative phenomenological study employing in-depth interviews was the design used for this undertaking. Phenomenology searches for the meaning or essence of an experience rather than measurements or explanations. Qualitative research method is useful in discovering the meaning of the people lived to that particular events and experience. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative. Patton (1987) stated that, In-depth interviewing often involves qualitative data, it is also called qualitative interviewing. Researcher use to elicit information in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation.

This study utilized qualitative techniques for data gathering, specifically employing In-depth Interviews (IDI) to explore the perspectives of teachers towards inclusive education. IDIs were chosen to facilitate a deep understanding of teachers' views, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of information gathered. Qualitative methods such as IDIs are valued for their ability to uncover nuanced insights and personal experiences, allowing researchers to capture rich data that may not be accessible through quantitative approaches alone.
The design of in-depth interviews was selected to enable participants to express their views openly and in detail, providing a holistic understanding of their perceptions, challenges, and strategies related to inclusive education practices. By focusing on qualitative data collection, the study aimed to uncover underlying attitudes, beliefs, and experiences that shape teachers' practices and interactions within inclusive classrooms.

Furthermore, qualitative research methodologies like IDIs emphasize the importance of context and participant perspectives, enriching the study's findings with nuanced qualitative data. This approach is instrumental in exploring complex issues such as trustworthiness and efficiency in educational settings, offering valuable insights for informing policy and practice in inclusive education.

Research Participants
The research will involve eight General Education Teachers employed at Sta. Maria Integrated School, who play pivotal roles in instructing students within inclusive classrooms. These teachers will provide valuable insights into their teaching methods, experiences with curriculum adaptations, and perceptions of inclusive education practices. By focusing on these educators, the study aims to capture firsthand accounts of the challenges, strategies, and outcomes associated with teaching diverse student populations in inclusive settings.

Purposive sampling, a deliberate non-probability sampling technique, will be employed in this study. This approach ensures that participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this case, teachers with direct experience in inclusive education settings are chosen to provide in-depth perspectives on their instructional practices and perceptions. By selecting participants who have firsthand knowledge of the complexities and dynamics of inclusive classrooms, the study aims to generate rich qualitative data that can inform educational policy and practice.

Moreover, purposive sampling will include considerations such as selecting teachers who have experience with diverse student needs, varying levels of support, and different classroom contexts within the school. This diversity among participants ensures that the study captures a range of perspectives and experiences, enhancing the depth and breadth of the findings.

Inclusive education involves adapting teaching approaches and curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students, including those with disabilities or special educational needs. Understanding how teachers navigate these challenges, implement effective strategies, and perceive their roles within inclusive education frameworks is crucial for improving educational outcomes and fostering inclusive school environments.

By employing qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews (IDIs), the study will facilitate open and detailed discussions with teachers, allowing them to articulate their experiences, challenges, successes, and recommendations for enhancing inclusive practices. This methodological approach not only ensures the reliability and validity of the data but also provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in inclusive education.

Through this research, stakeholders can gain valuable insights into the factors that contribute to effective inclusive education, thereby informing policies, professional development initiatives, and support systems that promote inclusive practices and improve educational outcomes for all students.

Research Instruments
In conducting research on the effectiveness of inclusive education in basic education schools, the researcher has developed a researcher-made interview questionnaire to serve as a structured guide for questioning participants during the data gathering process. This questionnaire serves a dual purpose: it not only facilitates systematic data collection but also functions as an instrument to explore participants' perceptions and experiences related to inclusive education practices.

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Qualitative interviews are integral to this research methodology, employing open-ended questions that encourage participants to express their views, experiences, and insights in their own words. Unlike closed-ended questions that provide predefined response options, open-ended questions require participants to articulate their thoughts, feelings, and perspectives more extensively. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of complex issues and a richer understanding of the nuances involved in inclusive education.
The interview questionnaire has been carefully designed to align with the research objectives and explore key aspects such as teaching methodologies, curriculum adaptations, challenges faced, and perceived outcomes of inclusive education initiatives. By using open-ended questions, the researcher aims to capture detailed narratives and diverse viewpoints from participants, enhancing the depth and breadth of qualitative data collected.

Data Analysis
The data gathered from the in-depth interview done with the participants will be analyzed one by one. Since the data will be gathered with the use of smartphone recorder, it was thoroughly listened and was written in field notes and was then encoded for the filing of the Chapter 3. Answers from the respondents were encoded verbatimly and was given connection to the study. The following tool will be used in interpreting the responses and information in this study.

In-depth Interview (IDI). This will be used by the researcher to learn the views and insights of the efficacy of inclusive education initiatives at Sta. Maria Integrated School.

Thematic Content Analysis. This will be used in interpreting the responses made by the key participants in determining the views and insights of the efficacy of inclusive education initiatives at Sta. Maria Integrated School.

Their responses will be processed and conducted through analyses. Transcripts will be coded in considerable detailed with the focus shifting back and forth from the key claims of the participants to the researcher's interpretation of the meaning of the responses and subjectively interpreted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the implication from the results of the data analysis from the interviews and then makes recommendations for further research.

The findings from this study highlight the perspectives and experiences of teachers towards inclusive education. Through qualitative analysis of interviews and surveys, several key themes have emerged, shedding light on the challenges, successes, and areas for improvement in implementing inclusive practices in classrooms.

Implications
Based on the results, the following implication is presented:
One prominent theme that emerged is the importance of collaboration and community engagement in fostering inclusive education. Teachers emphasized the critical role of building a supportive network within the school community and beyond, including colleagues, administrators, parents, and external professionals. Collaborative efforts were seen as essential for sharing resources, expertise, and best practices, ultimately enhancing the quality of support provided to students with diverse learning needs.

Another significant finding relates to the challenges faced by teachers due to the lack of specialized training in inclusive education. Many educators expressed feeling overwhelmed by the need to individualize instruction and support for each student, particularly without adequate preparation during their pre-service education programs. This underscores the importance of continuous professional development and support to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively manage diversity in inclusive classrooms.

Furthermore, the study underscored the critical role of fostering a culture of respect and acceptance in promoting inclusive education within basic education schools. Teachers emphasized the importance of cultivating learning environments where every student feels valued, respected, and included, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or abilities. This inclusive ethos was identified as foundational to creating supportive and enriching educational experiences for all learners.

Strategies identified by teachers included promoting empathy among students, addressing prejudice through education and dialogue, and actively celebrating the diversity within classrooms. These strategies are essential components in fostering inclusive learning environments that nurture positive social interactions, mutual understanding, and collaborative learning experiences among students of varied abilities and backgrounds.
The study's findings provide valuable insights into the perspectives and experiences of teachers towards inclusive education practices. By highlighting both the challenges encountered and the successes achieved, the research informs educational stakeholders about effective approaches to enhancing inclusive education within school settings.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts among educators, administrators, families, and community stakeholders in advancing inclusive education agendas. Collaborative initiatives can support the development and implementation of inclusive policies, curriculum adaptations, and support systems that cater to the diverse needs of students.

Ongoing professional development emerged as a crucial factor in equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to implement inclusive practices effectively. Professional learning opportunities that focus on inclusive teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, and positive behavior support systems can empower educators to address the individualized learning needs of students and create inclusive classrooms that maximize learning outcomes for all. Such professional development programs should be continuous, relevant, and reflective of current best practices in inclusive education.

In summary, the findings underscore the transformative potential of inclusive education practices in promoting equitable educational opportunities for all students. By addressing identified challenges and leveraging successful strategies, educators can collectively work towards creating inclusive classrooms that uphold principles of respect, acceptance, and diversity. This commitment is essential for fostering inclusive school cultures where every learner can thrive and achieve their full potential. Moreover, it highlights the need for systemic support, including adequate resources, policy revisions, and community engagement, to sustain and enhance inclusive education efforts.

Policymakers, school administrators, and educators must collaborate to ensure that inclusive education is not merely an aspirational goal but a practical reality. By investing in professional development, fostering a supportive school climate, and encouraging active participation from all stakeholders, schools can create environments that truly embrace and celebrate diversity. This holistic approach is vital for building inclusive educational systems that not only accommodate but also celebrate the unique strengths and contributions of every student.

Future Directions
Based on the findings of this study, the following future directions are presented;

Advocate for Specialized Training
Teachers should advocate for comprehensive and ongoing training in inclusive education as part of their professional development. This training should cover a range of topics, including understanding diverse learning needs, implementing evidence-based practices, and fostering inclusive classroom environments. By lobbying educational institutions and policymakers for increased support and resources for professional development, teachers can ensure they have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of all students effectively.

The passage emphasizes the importance of comprehensive training in inclusive education for teachers. It highlights the benefits of such training, such as improved student outcomes, reduced teacher stress and burnout, enhanced collaboration, and a positive impact on school climate. Training should cover various learning styles, disabilities, and cultural backgrounds to equip teachers to differentiate instruction and provide appropriate support. Teachers should be trained on evidence-based practices, such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), cooperative learning, and differentiated instruction.

Training should also focus on fostering positive classroom culture, promoting empathy and understanding, and addressing prejudice and discrimination. Effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution skills are essential for teachers to work effectively with colleagues, families, and external professionals. Assistive technology training can empower teachers to create inclusive learning experiences for students with diverse needs.

Teachers can advocate for increased support for inclusive education training programs through teacher-led initiatives, data-driven arguments, collaboration with parents and community, and targeting policymakers for changes in curriculum standards and funding allocations. By actively advocating for comprehensive and ongoing training, teachers can ensure they have the necessary tools and knowledge to create thriving learning environments for all students, benefiting not only student success but also fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning experience for everyone.

Collaborate and Share Best Practices

Teachers should actively collaborate with colleagues, both within their own school and across educational settings, to share best practices and strategies for inclusive education. By forming professional learning communities and participating in peer observation and feedback processes, teachers can learn from each other's experiences, exchange ideas, and refine their approaches to supporting diverse learners. Collaborative efforts can also extend to partnering with parents, support staff, and community organizations to maximize resources and support for inclusive education.

Expanding collaboration strategies for inclusive education can provide numerous benefits, including shared expertise, family and community engagement, and the development of comprehensive support plans. Collaboration beyond teachers can involve specialists like therapists, counselors, and support staff, allowing for a more holistic understanding of student needs and the development of comprehensive support plans. Partnering with parents and community organizations can provide valuable insights into their child's strengths and needs, while community organizations may offer additional support services or experiential learning opportunities.

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