

Self-Efficacy towards Inclusive Education among Foreign Exchange Teachers in North Dakota

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Abstract—This descriptive-correlational study investigated the self-efficacy among foreign exchange teachers in handling students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom and it also identified the variables that had significant influence on their self-efficacy. The study consisted of 32 Filipino exchange teachers in special education and general education from a public school district in North Dakota, USA for school year 2021–2022. Data were collected electronically using a standardized tool that measured the self-efficacy to teach in inclusive classrooms and participants voluntarily accomplished the tool. The results revealed that the teachers had the highest level of efficacy in teaching students with disabilities in relation to collaboration, while their lowest level of efficacy is in managing the inappropriate behavior of the students with disabilities. The multiple linear regression analysis indicated that their teaching assignment whether they are special education teachers or general education teachers had a significant influence on their self-efficacy. Meanwhile, the variables like the grade level they belong to, the number of years of teaching in the U.S., and having experience in handling students with special needs did not have significant effect on their self-efficacy. Overall, the teachers' high score was indicative of their positive teaching efficacy towards inclusion. This showed that the teachers believe in their ability in carrying out necessary activities that promote inclusive education. The results also implied that having specialized training and educational background in special education can influence their ability in implementing inclusive practices. It is recommended that the exchange teachers are given professional development programs that will enhance their effectiveness in handling students with special needs.

Keywords—self-efficacy, inclusive education, exchange teachers, inclusive instruction, collaboration, behavior management

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of major reforms in the educational system like inclusive education, everyone succumbs to the idea that teachers must be competent and skilled to deliver the quality service needed. This change was spawned by the multitude of forces in the national and international levels which impact the quality of teaching practices.

The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals highlighted the promotion of quality education through ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. To operationalize this goal, the target to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable including persons with disabilities was set [1].

The United States of America (USA) has been strong in its advocacy on inclusive education where students with special educational needs are being mainstreamed in the general education classroom. This practice is supported by various federal laws, and students with disabilities are protected from any discrimination. These laws include Americans with Disability Act of 1990, No Child Left Behind of 2001, Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act of 2004, and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. These mandates have intensified the movement towards inclusive education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children [2].

This inclusionary movement has established a more diverse student population in which general and special education teachers are responsible for providing instruction that meets the needs of all their students. Literatures revealed a dramatic increase in the number of students with severe/multiple disabilities receiving support in general education settings. It is then imperative that educators acquire the effective inclusive practices necessary to meet the unique needs of students with severe/multiple disabilities [3]. Everyday millions of students in the U.S. receive special education services. True inclusion is where students with learning disabilities are fully included in the general education classroom [4].

Educators in the U.S. have made significant progress towards creating a more inclusive educational system in which all children, including those with disabilities, are not just physically integrated into general education classrooms, but are able to experience both academic and social inclusion. Although many students with disabilities in the U.S. still do not experience what most would refer to as “full inclusion”, a large percentage spend the majority of their school time in general education settings [5]. With the challenges inherent in an inclusive

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classroom, teachers must be knowledgeable and competent to deliver quality education.

Exchange teachers occupy a certain percentage among those who teach in an inclusive classroom in the U.S. Exchange teachers have the opportunity to teach in accredited primary and secondary schools in the United States as exchange teachers as long as they meet the qualifications. They sharpen their professional skills and participate in cross-cultural activities in schools and communities, and they return to their home school after the exchange to share their experiences and increased knowledge of the U.S. and the U.S. educational system. The host schools involve exchange teachers in school and community cultural activities and monitor the performance of exchange teachers in the classroom and in carrying out official responsibilities [6]. Filipino exchange teachers fill in teacher shortages in the U.S. through this program. It is reported that unless major changes in teacher supply or a reduction in demand for additional teachers occur over the coming years, annual teacher shortages could increase to as much as 112,000 teachers by 2018, and remain close to that level thereafter [7].

Being immersed in a different system, it is just but imperative to determine some factors that help these Filipino exchange teachers thrive in an inclusive classroom. Conducting a study on such can be of help to address the paucity of research that relates to exchange teachers with regard to inclusive education. Literatures would point out that one factor that influences success in teaching is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy of teachers plays a key role in the process of educational inclusion [8]. In teacher education, especially in inclusive education, besides professional knowledge, dimensions such as attitude, practice, and self-efficacy should also be emphasized [9]. Self-efficacy has been found to increase teachers' effective teaching strategies and students' positive learning outcomes in inclusive education [10].

According to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-efficacy describes a person's belief in her or his capabilities for dealing with a specific task or course of action in a certain situation [11] and that individuals with a high level of self-efficacy develop high-level success scenarios [12]. It can be deduced that teachers with high levels of self-efficacy can carry out tasks and implement inclusive practices that will effectively teach and benefit students with disabilities in a general education classroom.

Teaching efficacy is the belief that one's teaching can affect certain educational outcomes. A teacher's efficacy beliefs are related to their behavior in the classroom and the amount of effort they invest in teaching. There is a relationship between what a teacher believes and how they interact and work with students in the classroom [13]. Self-efficacy beliefs exert their effects on performance directly as well as indirectly through various cognitive and affective mechanisms [14]. Teacher self-efficacy shows positive links with students' academic adjustment, patterns of teacher behavior and practices related to classroom quality, and factors underlying teachers'

psychological well-being, including personal accomplishment, job satisfaction, and commitment [15].

With the literatures, it is important to analyze the self-efficacy of Filipino exchange teachers in an inclusive classroom. This study specifically aimed to examine their self-efficacy along the three factors namely efficacy to use inclusive practices, efficacy in collaboration, and efficacy in dealing with disruptive behavior. It also determined whether the grade level they belong to, teaching assignment, number of years of teaching in the U.S., and having experience in handling or teaching students with disability had significant influence on their self-efficacy.

II. METHODS

A. Research Design

The researcher utilized descriptive-correlational method since the objective of the study was to ascertain prevailing conditions of facts regarding teacher's level of self-efficacy and identifying the demographic variables that have significant effect on the self-efficacy of the teachers.

B. Participants

The respondents of this research were thirty-two (32) Filipino exchange teachers from one of the school districts in North Dakota, USA. The school district includes an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. The majority of the participants are teaching in the elementary level (53%). Sixty-six percent (66%) are assigned as general education teachers. The majority have been teaching in the U.S. for more than 3 years (66%). Most of the respondents have experience in handling or teaching students with disability (84%). Table I below presents the profile of the respondents according to the variables of the study.

TABLE I. SUMMARY OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Demographic Variables		n	%
Grade level they belong to	Elementary	17	53
	Middle School	10	31
	High School	5	16
Teaching assignment	General Education	21	66
	Special Education	11	34
Number of years of teaching in the U.S.	3 years and below	11	34
	More than 3 years	21	66
Have experience in handling or teaching students with disability	Yes	27	84
	No	5	16

C. Data Gathering Instrument

The researcher used a survey-questionnaire to collect data. The first part of the tool included demographic information about each respondent. It consisted of the grade level they belong to (elementary, middle school, and high school), teaching assignment (general education and special education), number of years of teaching in the

U.S. (3 years and below and more than 3 years), and having an experience in handling/teaching students with disability (yes and no).

To identify the teacher’s self-efficacy, the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale designed by Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin (2012) was used. The scale measures teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy for teaching in inclusive classrooms. The researcher sought the approval of Dr. Umesh Sharma for him to use the tool for this study. The tool consisted of 18 items using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree and included the three factors which are efficacy in using inclusive instruction, efficacy in collaboration, and efficacy in dealing with disruptive behaviors. The alpha coefficient for the total scale was 0.89. Alpha coefficients for the three factors ranged from 0.85 to 0.93. Reliability analysis for the total scale as well as factors suggested that the scale provides a reliable measure of perceptions of self-efficacy for inclusion across different countries [16].

D. Procedure

The researcher requested approval and endorsement from the School District Superintendent for him to gather data from the Filipino exchange teachers electronically. After the approval, he forwarded the link of the online questionnaire to each of the teachers through their email addresses. A letter was incorporated informing them that any obtained information would be treated with the strictest confidentiality and that their responses would not place them at risk of criminal or civil liability. They were also told that the survey would not obtain their name and their responses were recorded in such a manner that could not be identified directly from them. The average time the participants completed the questionnaire was about 22 minutes.

E. Treatment of Data

The mean was used to measure the level of self-efficacy towards inclusive education among Filipino exchange teachers. Table II below shows the statistical limits for the analysis of data:

TABLE II. STATISTICAL LIMIT FOR SELF-EFFICACY

Statistical Limit	Numeric Value	Description
5.50–6.00	6	Strongly Agree
4.50–5.49	5	Agree
3.50–4.49	4	Somewhat Agree
2.50–3.49	3	Somewhat Disagree
1.50–2.49	2	Disagree
1.00–1.49	1	Strongly Disagree

The multiple linear regression analysis was used to identify which demographic variable had a significant effect on the self-efficacy of the teachers. This test considered all variables at the same time without violating its major assumptions. Model crafting was excluded in coherence with the main goal which was to explicitly identify significant variables.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Level of Self-Efficacy towards Inclusive Education among Filipino Exchange Teachers

Table III shows the level of self-efficacy of Filipino exchange teachers along with efficacy in using inclusive instruction, efficacy in collaboration, and efficacy in dealing with disruptive behavior.

TABLE III. LEVEL OF SELF-EFFICACY TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AMONG FILIPINO EXCHANGE TEACHERS

Items	Mean	Description
Efficacy in Using Inclusive Instruction		
I can use a variety of assessment strategies (e.g., portfolio assessment, modified tests, performance-based assessment, etc.).	5.28	Agree
I am able to provide an alternate explanation or example when students are confused.	5.19	Agree
I am confident in designing learning tasks so that the individual needs of students with learning disabilities are accommodated.	5.19	Agree
I can accurately gauge student comprehension of what I have taught.	5.03	Agree
I can provide appropriate challenges for very capable students.	5.16	Agree
I am confident in my ability to get students to work together in pairs or in small groups.	5.25	Agree
Area Mean	5.18	Agree
Efficacy in Collaboration		
I can assist families in helping their children do well in school.	5.34	Agree
I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom.	5.47	Agree
I am confident in my ability to get parents involved in school activities of their children with disabilities.	4.91	Agree
I can make parents feel comfortable coming to school.	5.28	Agree
I can collaborate with other professionals (e.g., itinerant teachers or speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities.	5.34	Agree
I am confident in informing others who know little about laws and policies relating to the inclusion of students with disabilities.	4.94	Agree
Area Mean	5.21	Agree
Efficacy in Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors		
I am confident in my ability to prevent disruptive behavior in the classroom before it occurs.	4.75	Agree
I can control disruptive behavior in the classroom.	4.59	Agree
I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy.	4.53	Agree
I am able to get children to follow classroom rules.	5.03	Agree
I am confident when dealing with students who are physically aggressive.	4.44	Somewhat Agree
I can make my expectations clear about student behavior.	5.09	Agree
Area Mean	4.74	Agree
Overall Mean	5.05	Agree

Generally, the teachers have high level of self-efficacy towards inclusive education. This implies that the teachers believe in their ability to carry out the tasks expected of them when teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom.

Among the three factors of self-efficacy, collaboration has the highest mean (5.21). This result indicates that they believe in themselves in making collaborative actions as part of their work in an inclusive setting. Moreover, among the 18 indicators of self-efficacy, the top three items with the highest means belong in the category of collaboration. The items include the following: “I am able to work jointly with other professionals and staff (e.g., aides, other teachers) to teach students with disabilities in the classroom” (5.47); “I can assist families in helping their children do well in school.” (5.34); and “I can collaborate with other professionals (e.g., itinerant teachers or speech pathologists) in designing educational plans for students with disabilities” (5.34).

Educating learners with special educational needs requires collaboration with several professionals and parents. In inclusive education, general classroom teachers may work with specialist teachers, paraprofessionals, special needs advisers, educational psychologists, therapists and other specialists, and community agencies [17]. The drive towards inclusive education necessitates a closer collaboration with other professions and sectors to promote educational support for all students in inclusive settings [18]. With the number of students with disabilities who are mainstreamed in an inclusive classroom, general teachers and other professionals need to work together to guarantee that all students obtain and be given suitable and appropriate training.

It is essential for teachers and educational assistants to work through the plan and create an inclusive environment together to ensure appropriate and meaningful opportunities are being facilitated for students with disabilities [19].

Family engagement can honor the lived experiences of all students like students with disabilities. It is important to prioritize families as equal partners in their child’s schooling and recognize the assets they bring as experts on their child’s needs and abilities [20]. A large body of research shows that varied forms of parent engagement have a positive influence on development, early learning, school readiness, and long-term educational success of all groups of children [21].

The category on dealing with disruptive behavior is the lowest among the three factors (4.74). Meanwhile, the three items that were rated the lowest among the 18 indicators fall in this category. It included the following: “I am confident when dealing with students who are physically aggressive” (4.44); “I am able to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy” (4.53); and “I can control disruptive behavior in the classroom” (4.59).

The results may be attributed to the diversity of the individual needs in an inclusive classroom which poses challenge among the teachers. As students with

disabilities have access to general education, teachers also have confronted with the challenge of designing appropriate approaches to meet their diverse academic and social needs. As the diversity of students’ characteristics within classrooms increases, the need arises for classroom behavior management systems. Educators face this difficulty when they teach a regular class while simultaneously addressing the needs of students with behavior problems [22].

It is critical to design appropriate approaches to manage classes with diverse students. It is important to assist teachers in their management of the children and provide teachers with effective tools that may improve their confidence and well-being [23]. Without intervention, these challenging behaviors often persist and negatively impact educational outcomes [24].

B. Effect of Demographic Variables on the Self-Efficacy of Filipino Exchange Teachers

Table IV presents the significant effect of identified variables on the teacher’s self-efficacy. The table revealed that their teaching assignment significantly influences their overall self-efficacy ($p < 0.05$) and in the areas of the use of inclusive instruction ($p < 0.05$) and collaboration ($p < 0.05$) with special education teachers having higher self-efficacy than the general education teachers. This finding may be attributed to the type of training and experience among special education teachers. As Bandura (1977, 1997) suggested, previous personal experience with the given task is often the strongest predictor of one’s percept of efficacy [14]. When teachers receive sufficient teaching and training experiences related to supporting children with disabilities, they tend to believe in inclusive education and their ability to serve all students in inclusive classrooms [10].

TABLE IV. EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ON THE SELF-EFFICACY OF FILIPINO EXCHANGE TEACHERS

Factors of Self-Efficacy	Demographic Variables				Handled/ Taught Students with Disability
	Grade Level	Teaching Assignment	Years of Teaching		
Using Inclusive Instruction	β	0.60	3.13	-0.29	-2.66
	t	0.800	2.287	-0.214	-1.711
	p	0.431	0.030*	0.832	0.099
Collaboration	β	0.30	3.17	0.17	-1.57
	t	0.429	2.511	0.135	-1.090
	p	0.671	0.018*	0.894	0.285
Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors	β	0.71	1.90	0.98	-1.93
	t	0.751	1.116	0.573	-0.996
	p	0.459	0.274	0.571	0.328
Self-efficacy	β	1.61	8.20	0.86	-6.15
	t	0.750	2.111	0.219	-1.393
	p	0.459	0.044*	0.828	0.175

*Significant on the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

The other main findings of the study reveal that the grade level they belong to, number of years of teaching in the U.S., and having experience in handling or teaching students with disability do not significantly influence their self-efficacy towards inclusive education.

IV. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze the self-efficacy of Filipino exchange teachers and revealed that they have positive teaching efficacy towards inclusive education. The teachers believe in their ability in carrying out necessary activities that promote inclusion. Furthermore, having specialized training and educational background in special education can influence their ability in implementing inclusive practices.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the researcher recommends that the school district should provide professional development programs to all teachers about effective strategies and inclusive practices in teaching and handling students with special needs. The school district can institute an induction program for exchange teachers where they are engaged in discussions on how to make appropriate accommodations and modifications in a general education classroom especially that they have varied cultural orientations in relation to handling learners with disabilities. Trainings on research-based and evidence-based practices in teaching students with disabilities may be included in the professional development programs.

The research has also practical implications to teacher education institutions in the Philippines. They should intensify the training of future teachers in relation to inclusive education. These prospective teachers must be given appropriate trainings on how to deal with students with disabilities in an effective manner.

Future research may be conducted with a broader scope in terms of locale and participants. Research utilizing mixed methods may be done to have an in-depth analysis of the self-efficacy of teachers.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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