

Prospective Language Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes towards the Inclusion of Special Learners in Regular Classrooms

Gabrielle Therese Francisco, Bernadeth Abequibel-Encarnacion, Benhur Asid, Analyn Saavedra

College of Teacher Education, Western Mindanao State University

Abstract

This study investigated the various beliefs and attitudes of prospective language teachers towards inclusive education, limited only to the context of Filipino prospective language teachers, majoring in English and Filipino languages. The target population consisted of 10 prospective teachers, of whom all had at least introductory knowledge of inclusive education. The data gathered was elicited through semi-structured interviews and was analyzed through thematic analysis. From the data, results show that the prospective teachers had pro-inclusive beliefs and attitudes, where the most common emerging theme was that the prospective teachers had a great sense of duty as a teacher which made them support inclusivity as education is for all and it is a teacher's job to provide that education. This study provides insights into how current educators in training see inclusion and may contribute to the literature on inclusive education within the country.

Keywords: inclusion, special learners, inclusive education, inclusivity, language teachers, prospective language teachers, prospective teachers

Introduction

Inclusive education (IE) is an educational approach where it encompasses the idea of inclusion. Inclusion is defined as the act of involving something else with another thing, (Merriam-Webster, 2022; Pil et al., 2022) this approach in education practices the involvement of students considered as special learners or who need special needs in learning, and then are integrated fully or partly into the mainstream or regular classes where they will be able to participate along with non-special students (Şahan, 2021; Tyagi, 2016). The notion of inclusive education is an unfamiliar concept to most people. Accordingly introduced around the late 1980s, it was made initially as an alternative to special education. But later, inclusive education introduced many more possibilities in schools. It allowed schools to increase access for students, and to create environments that could allow marginalized students to participate and could learn in normal settings. (Kozleski & Yu, 2021). Lipsky and Gartner argued that inclusion is not just another reform of the existing special

education system but instead, it is a response to the need for educating a diverse group of learners and for providing them with similar opportunities and quality education as their mainstream peers.

Special learners are students who are defined to be learners who have specific needs when it comes to their learning. They are students who are characterized to be special because of their differences in mental, sensory, social, physical, and/or neuromuscular abilities which are often in need of educational services (Special Education Act, 2019). But in the definition of inclusivity, it is not just special learners who are deemed to be included but are now inclusive of students who have a difference concerning their culture, ethnicity, language, and any other difference that is not necessarily viewed as a "norm" in specific societies. (Tyagi, 2016). But commonly, inclusive education is still seen as a type of education that involves those that have disabilities that affect student learning.

Historically, people with disabilities were not given the right to proper education. Around the year the 1800s, the law even had schools not give rights to enroll anyone deemed to be weak or just different. (Winzer, 1993; Yell et al., 1998). As time passed, education for special learners gradually evolved to special education where the special learners were given a separate class to learn. But even with that, stigma and negative beliefs still spread around about special people which led to more segregation of the learners. But around the 1900s, more laws were created for special education which eventually led to the creation of inclusive education (Armstrong et al., 2010). The first ever law within the Philippines that acknowledged its concept was on July 6, 2009, on the DO 72, s 2009 "Inclusive Education as Strategy for Increasing Participation Rate of Children" to which it stated that DEPED guarantees that inclusive education would guarantee the right that children who have disabilities would receive appropriate and equal education like all other students. Inclusive education in this law states that it "embraces the philosophy of accepting all children regardless of race, size, shape, color, ability or disability with support from school staff, students, parents, and the community". Recently, a new law has been enacted on March 2022, the "Save the Children Philippines" brought in a new republic act, which is RA 11650, stating a policy that gives more support to inclusive education. This act "safeguards the recognition, protection, and promotion of the rights of all learners with disabilities – whether in school or out of school, to education based on equal opportunity."

Before, special education was the only type of education introduced for special learners. But this kind of education was disapproved of its function as it puts special learners or more specifically, disabled people in a negative light; making them excluded from all other activities all other people have (Armstrong et al., 2010) Hence, inclusive education was proposed as a far better concept that

introduces a lot more opportunities and prospects for all, whether special learner or not. Inclusive education emphasizes the idea that it is never the student's fault if they are not learning, it is the education system that is failing to do its job in educating; never was it the disability of the child to reach the standards. The school should have been the one responsible to provide the means for the child to acquire quality education (Tyagi, 2016). Inclusive education embraces the perspective of accepting all with the notion of both equality and equity (Bariffe & Pitta, 2008). With that, upholding inclusive classrooms requires teachers to have the training and understanding of certain qualities teachers need to have. Teachers need to be proactive, observant, and respectful as well as know exactly how to handle any kind of disability, whether it be physical, mental, or social (Massouti, 2021). Teachers need to be aware of how to handle these class differences, as well as provide the necessary solutions to problems that both special and non-special students have.

With globalization and diversity being significant movement throughout the world, inclusivity is a truth that all needs to understand and learn of. With this, preservice teachers must be well versed in its idea and at least have a basic awareness of what inclusion in education could mean for their careers. With these implications, this research is conducted to find out the various beliefs and attitudes prospective language teachers may have on inclusive education to give insight into how such future teachers will handle inclusive education in their future profession. The researcher will attempt to gather information on what possible beliefs teacher candidates have and what acts or behaviors they think they will undertake when they imagine themselves handling an inclusive classroom.

Review of Related Literature

Attitudes on Inclusive Education

Attitudes are a way of thinking about a person or a particular subject. It is a reaction that can be positive or negative (Alieto et al., 2020; Buslon et al., 2020; Cambridge Dictionary, 2022; Go Silk et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2020; Somblingo & Alieto, 2019). The factors to make it positive or negative can vary. In the context of inclusive education, attitudes tend to be positive when teachers are trained well in dealing with inclusive education, students are aware of inclusive education, there is sufficient support in terms of materials and facilities and the number of special students in the classroom is only a small amount and then in some cases it is seen to become negative because of factors like lack of training and education on teachers about inclusive education, students are not made aware, both students and teachers are taught negatively on the topic, and the decreasing/continuous lack of funds and support to uplift the quality of materials and facilities for

the special needs of these special students (Jury et al., 2021). And then it is also observed that teachers often found inclusive education to be burdening if there are many cases of special students within the class because it would affect their workload as they would be more burdened with adjusting and catering to each individual need. Another concern is the amount of training received by teachers; to which if there is significantly less training, teachers will tend to have more negative attitudes than positive ones as they will feel inadequate and unprepared to handle such classrooms. In part with that, also the type of special learners being included in the class is a concern because the teachers may not know what or how to handle the specialness of each different learner. (Schmidt& Vrhovnik, 2015; Jones, 2020; Şahan, 2021)All of these are partly a cause for why they have negative views on inclusive education. Only when the disabilities that these special learners have were less severe, the class was fewer in number and the teachers would have received proper and adequate training will their attitudes accordingly be better and more positive. (Jones, 2020)

However, some do find it positive as they have had enough training if many teachers find this practice to be positive, it could lead to many institutions adopting it, education systems being more open, and special learners feeling more welcome and safer within the premises of schools.

A multitude of studies has given evidence to these claims. One study gave findings that preservice teachers would have moderate to favorable attitudes towards inclusive education. It was revealed that the main reason for this kind of attitude was the exposure they had to teaching programs and their teacher training course. This gives evidence of how teachers' attitudes towards IE would be affected by what is given within their time of training. (Singh et al., 2020)

But if teachers have an opposite outlook to this educational system, just like how it is often now, then our schools would be reluctant to openness and change and special learners will continue to receive negative treatment just because of their lack of normalcy. This can be damaging to their lives and is also a violation of the notion that education is for all. Inclusion is not just allowing diversity in the classroom but also teaches all about social acceptance, equality, and equity for all students no matter their unique capabilities. (Bariffe&Pitta, 2021)

In a different study (Lao et al., 2022), negative attitudes were found in the results. It was discovered by the researchers that the pre-service teacher had a "somehow negative" attitude towards inclusive education because of factors including the lack of assurance in the prospective teachers' preparedness and the little awareness of inclusive education because of the lack of emphasis on the topic within their educational curriculum. The results also showed how gender had an effect in the results where females had a much more negative attitude towards IE compared to the males who

had neutral to slightly negative ones. This concerned the researchers because of the known fact that teaching is a female-dominated domain, and female preservice teachers having such attitudes may very well affect the improvement or development of good inclusive practices. A similar study by Siason et al. (2022) also revealed negative attitudes from teacher candidates on the notion of inclusive education. It is deduced that they manifested negative attitudes because of teacher candidates not having much understanding involving the practice and that amongst the institutions sampled, there was only one that provided a program on special education.

Another study provided results that were found to have the prospective teachers having more positive attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive education, contradictory to the initial hypotheses of the attitudes to be negative. The participants in this study expressed positive attitudes accordingly because how inclusivity was a relatively new idea for them and they had a strong belief in the notion that all had the right to be educated and that inclusion would more likely benefit students, no matter the extra work it would provide.

Many of the studies have significantly similar factors affecting attitudes. These factors are child-related factors, teacher-related factors, and environmental factors. Child-related factors included concerns about the type of disability of students, the number of special learners in classrooms, and the severity of the specific disability. Some studies exhibited results that teachers would pose negative attitudes because of the burden that may accompany handling such learners; especially because there is a great need for differentiated learning rather than a much more general treatment for all learners. Teacher-related factors include the amount of training and education teachers will receive during their training years and negative attitudes that occur if teachers tend to have little to no training or education at all, leading to their ignorance, lack of awareness, and feeling of incompetence in handling such classes. And finally, environmental factors are about the facilities and materials needed to accommodate and nurture the specific special needs of multiple learners; and lack of any of these protrudes negativity as teachers will not be able to fully cater to such needs with their own hands. (Jenson, 2018)

And considering the advent of the “New Normal” in education, a lot more problems for future educators will emerge as blended and remote learning may be a huge struggle for special learners as there will be less interaction with the teacher and more self-regulation in learning, which special learners already struggle in even during traditional classrooms. (Butial et al., 2022; Dela Rama et al., 2020; Jacinto & Alieto, 2020; Mumbing et al., 2021)

With these factors and implications on what attitudes may bring on the notion of inclusive education, this study is encouraged to further investigate the possible attitudes of the prospective language teachers at the university of western Mindanao.

Beliefs in Inclusive Education

Belief on the other hand is the acceptance that something, a concept, object, person, or any other item, is true, even if others say it is not (Lim-Ramos et al., 2020). In other definitions, beliefs are more commonly associated with religion or politics. Beliefs are most often affected by upbringing or cultures taught at a young age but come to change as the person discovers more about the world around them.

In our lives, beliefs would be influenced by the direct people around us, our parents, siblings, relatives, teachers, and classmates. We change beliefs according to what is being told to us the truth. But as one grows older and educates themselves on certain beliefs, then their beliefs may change to respond to new knowledge (University of Reading, 2022). Therefore, teachers' beliefs on inclusive education may very well be affected by what they were taught growing up and it could be presumed that if they have negative beliefs about inclusivity, then they might have been exposed to negative behavior and reactions towards special people, hence why they aren't so open to it. And if they do exhibit positive beliefs, then they must have been exposed to a good environment with special people. There would be teachers who view inclusive education in a negative sense due to their lack of knowledge or training and lack of understanding about students' special needs. Then, there would be teachers who exhibit positive views and believe inclusivity is good as they have seen how inclusive education gave positive environments to the students in need (Horzum & Izci, 2018).

Many studies have provided results as to why teachers would exhibit such a view on inclusive education. The study by authors Budiyanto et al. (2020) found that teachers don't have much experience or training in dealing with special kids, hence the indifference to such approaches. They believed that if they just had proper training and programs to supply that knowledge on dealing with special kids, they would be more comfortable with the idea of inclusivity and will support it more so. The study authored by Horzum and Izci in 2018 had similar results as teachers had negative nuances as they thought that inclusive education would bring about unfairness in terms of teacher time and that problems with communication may arise.

Another study by Bariffe and Pitta (2021) however had results of teachers having better views on inclusive education where they believed that inclusive environments are generally positive as the

teachers had this "love for children and that those who have been working for far longer had more positive views than their younger peers. It is highlighted that school culture is a great influence on teachers' beliefs and attitudes and that if there is a negative school atmosphere, then teachers would then also exhibit negative beliefs and attitudes.

Thus, this study is determined to gather data on the various beliefs the preservice teachers may have towards inclusive education as well as the factors that may have influenced these beliefs and attitudes.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to research. Qualitative research is a type of research that collects non-numerical data and is used to observe and gather evidence of concepts, characteristics, and descriptions of things rather than calculating them (Stanford, 2022). The research aimed to find answers to these questions.

Research questions

- What beliefs do prospective teachers have toward inclusive education?
- What attitudes do prospective teachers have towards the inclusion of special learners?

Participants of the study

The participants of this study involved the pre-service teachers at western Mindanao state university, specifically the 3rd year students who were to become 4th years. Only the third-year students were included in the study as they were the only willing participants that were suitable for the criteria that only undergraduate language education majors of Western Mindanao State University are to be involved in the study.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews to use for the data gathering and were constructed by the researcher and later validated by university professors. These interviews consisted of three questions measuring demographics, four warmups measuring background information on inclusive education, about four measuring attitudes, and four for beliefs, which sums up that the interview had sixteen questions in total. The interviews were done remotely, using online calls to contact the respondents.

Before the interviews, the researcher asked respondents about their willingness to participate. If they consented the interview would be scheduled on a date, they were willing to have it. If they did not, they were acknowledged, and the researcher sought other respondents. The interview was documented via screen recording, using the app Streamlabs as it had features of on-screen recording within the computer. Along with the recording, the researcher jotted a few notes of the respondents' answers to later ask questions about.

The interviews allowed the researcher to acquire ideas about what attitudes the preservice teachers have toward the idea of inclusive education and what beliefs they hold towards inclusive education. The interviews were constructed to procure either positive or negative ideas. The respondents were free to express any idea that they had towards inclusive education.

Results and discussions

This study focused on determining whether the prospective language teachers had either positive or negative attitudes and beliefs toward the idea of inclusive education. In this chapter, the researcher began analyzing the data by assigning codes to each respondent to keep their anonymity. After that, themes were extracted from the data and analyzed to determine the common ideas that prospective teachers had toward inclusive education.

Table 1. Demographic and background information.

Respondents	Language Major	Age	Background Information on Inclusive Education	Experience with Inclusive Education
Respondent 1	English	20	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Had special classmates. Special classmates were sometimes left out of class interaction.
Respondent 2	English	22	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Had special classmates during high school years. Special classmates had a hard time catching up with certain subjects.
Respondent 3	English	20	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd	Does not recall much except for a semi-blind classmate. However, didn't have much

			year of university.	interaction with a said classmate
Respondent 4	Filipino	20	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Does not recall having any experience with inclusion in their early years.
Respondent 5	English	20	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Does not recall having any experience with inclusion in their early years.
Respondent 6	English	21	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Had special classmates. Classmates were all treated fairly.
Respondent 7	Filipino	22	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Had special classmates during elementary and senior high school. Special classmates were not so social but everyone was treated well.
Respondent 8	English	21	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Had special classmates during elementary. Special classmates were called SPED and during that time, SPED had a negative connotation to it. Recalls an experience during 4 th grade of a classmate who had motor disabilities and struggled because of constantly transferring classes as they were not able to access upper floors.
Respondent 9	English	21	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd	Did not have special classmates but recalls seeing special students from other

			year of university.	sections. Special students were treated normally as the practice was normalized.
Respondent 10	Filipino	20	Heard of inclusive education during their subject on inclusive education in 2 nd year of university.	Had a special classmate during 3 rd grade. A classmate had vision problems which lead to them having reading problems. Recalled being the special classmate's seatmate and helping with that classmate's struggles.

The respondents consisted of only third-year students heading to their fourth year as they were the only available respondents willing to take part in the interview. They also are respondents who have had at least some background information on inclusive education. The background information and past experiences of the respondents will support the ideas that they provide in later questions. As past knowledge may very well influence their attitudes and beliefs (University of Reading, 2022; Jury et al., 2021).

All the prospective teachers had background information on inclusive education during a subject in their previous year. All only heard of the concept of inclusive education during that subject, and most have shared their experience with having classmates that were considered special during their early years.

Main analysis

Now to discuss the main analysis. Following the interview questions and the two research questions it falls under, about six major themes were identified. Two major themes from the question on beliefs and another 4 for the question on attitude. Table 2 shows the different breakdowns of themes that emerged within the data.

Table 2. Summary of Major Themes and Sub-Themes.

Research Questions	Major Themes Emerging	Sub-Themes Emerging
<p>What beliefs do prospective teachers have toward inclusive education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is inclusive education in your view? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you find it a positive concept or a negative one? • How about from others, what have you heard of inclusive education from other people? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do others talk of it as a positive thing or a negative one? • How important do you think inclusive education is in our education system? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you think it's really necessary that we have to implement or is it just something that can be optional? • What do you believe would be the most important aspect/s or 	<p>Pro-inclusive beliefs</p> <p>No one size fits all</p>	<p>Pro-inclusive beliefs</p> <p><i>Right of everyone to equal education, allows interaction with diverse learners, Caters to each learner's need, Raises awareness of discrimination</i></p> <p>No one size fits all</p> <p><i>No kid left behind , Exposure to differences , Differentiated Instruction, Catering to each learner's need, Differentiated Instruction</i></p>

<p>trait/s in teaching in an inclusive classroom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Can you elaborate on why do you think that those are the most important? <p>What attitudes do prospective teachers have on the inclusion of special learners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● If you were ever to have or handle a classroom, in the future, that had special learners, how do you imagine yourself to act?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Would you be accepting or not? Do you think you would like it or not? And why?● What concerns do you imagine you would face in having a class with special learners?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Can you give me an example of how you would imagine yourself dealing with these concerns?● What benefits do you think would be had in having special	<p>Sense of duty as a teacher</p> <p>Sense of belongingness</p>	<p>Sense of duty as a teacher</p> <p><i>The teacher's job is to teach, no matter the student, Challenge to teaching, Little training in the field of inclusion calls for the need for better training and education involving inclusive education</i></p> <p>Sense of belongingness</p> <p><i>Making special students feel belonged, Compassion, and Patience as the main qualities. Concerns about bullying, discrimination, Communication, and how students would perform</i></p>
--	---	---

<p>learners in normal classrooms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you think would these benefits do to education in the classroom? To the way both normal and special students learn? (If none) Why do you say there are no benefits to it? ● How would you describe your teaching approach or style if you ever got to teach a classroom with special learners? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would you be one to have a specific approach/style in teaching? Or would you be one to have a hybrid approach where you would implement a mix of approaches? ● With your approach in mind, can you give me an example of a scenario of how you would use this approach if you were in a real classroom setting? 		
---	--	--

Main Themes

Pro-inclusive beliefs

The prospective teachers (PT) were first asked about their beliefs on inclusion. Whether they found it positive or not. The question posed was "What is inclusive education in your view? Do you find it

a positive concept or a negative one?" Most of the respondents answered positively and stated that they view it as positive as it gives everyone the right to equal education, no matter their ability. For example,

PT2: I also find it positive because it allows special learners or students with disabilities to learn – together with these normal students.

PT3: inclusive education is a positive thing because the students... students with special needs can interact with normal students. And normal students could also understand the situation of these people with - these students with special needs

PT4: So, any education received by the normal students, then they [special students] deserve also to learn about that

PT5: So, in an inclusive education no matter who you are right, no matter what type of learner you are, you are a student

PT6: We can give them the fair and you know, the same treatment, without the need to separate things, without the need to differentiate the subjects that they need to have

PT7: If these children you see, would be left behind. Like it says something about the educational system that it only caters to certain students within this range of abilities and if you are outside that scope, then you are forced to adjust accordingly.

PT8: the goal of learning really, it's to be delivered to everyone, it's to be accessible to everyone, despite their abilities or their range of needs.

PT9: children with special needs or students with special needs also deserve the same kind of opportunities or the same learning experiences as the other kids, you know. Um, we shouldn't treat them differently, or isolate them

PT10: So, in this inclusive education it helps the people to treat [each other] equally

No one size fits all

The second major theme is the idea of "No one size fits all". That it is a teacher's job to be able to cater to each student's learning need; to recognize what each learner's strengths and weaknesses are and respond to those rather than just giving out generalizations and a "one size fits all" approach. Questions that acquired this recurring theme were "What do you believe would be the most important aspect/s or trait/s in teaching in an inclusive classroom?" and "If you were to ever be in a

classroom with special learners, how would you describe your teaching approach or teaching style? Would you be one to have a specific approach/style in teaching or would you be wanting to have a hybrid approach where you would implement a mix of approaches?" Respondents below expressed this idea,

PT1: teachers should exert an extra effort to make the classes as creative as possible without leaving anyone behind and they should help the students bring out their best potential

PT2: we must understand that we have diverse learners, they have diverse needs. That means they have different learning styles; they have these different strategies for learning. understand how to deal with these diverse learners

PT3: a teacher should have a sense of equity. you're not going to give everyone as one size fits all but you're going to give more effort to those in need so that is what it means to have a sense of equity

PT4:We know that they have these different capacities to learn, and they have these different personalities and attitudes in the classroom.

PT5: as they say there's no one-size-fits-all. So, we need to have that continuous improvement of our teaching strategies for us to make sure that the future students absorb whatever it is we are teaching. Especially if you have different learners. And most especially if you are going to have a learner with special needs. A teacher must know what kind of strategy he or she will use to be able to deliver the concept very well.

PT6: Wetoo, the teachers,must know what are the aspects that would perfectly fit their interests so that they would listen in our class.

PT7: when it comes to facilitating and assisting the students and how to approach students since they all have different needs. So as a teacher, you are the one to know that. With each of your students, you must see and check if they are doing well. Especially those with disabilities since they have a lot more needs than others.

PT8: the most important trait is your flexibility as a teacher. If you are flexible, you see that the child with special needs was struggling to cope with their peers or to get the subject lesson, it is important to be flexible as a teacher so that you can accommodate their immediate needs. As a teacher, you always need to find ways, like what my professor said before "exhaust all options that you have and help the children."

PT9: being able to differentiate the type or the way of or the technique in teaching uh, concerning the different needs of the students, especially those with special needs. As teachers, you're not going to, you know, limit them just because we think they cannot do it. It's not like that. We must keep a positive mindset that they can do it and we'll just adjust according to their capabilities.

Duty as a teacher

The next major theme that surfaced from the data was that their acceptance of inclusion stems from the idea that it is their duty as a teacher to do so. That the essence of being a teacher is to educate all, without bias or discrimination. Participants that expressed this are the following,

PT1: the schools or the authorities, the educational authorities, and the educational agencies. They really should put an effort into the training of teachers because it's necessary.

PT3: I will accept these students because they are the ones who will try to still try to learn. even if they're getting behind.

PT5: It is part of our duty to teach, to teach children, to teach learners and by the term learners there is no definition that learners are to be normal. When we say learners everything, everything that makes the person a learner is a learner. So, whether there are capabilities in a student or none, I will gladly accept them because that is what being a teacher is right. You teach because it is your passion to teach children, it is your utmost desire to teach and to impart knowledge to every, every kind or type of learner. May it be the ones who have special needs or not.

PT6: So being a teacher inside a class, I must be even if I don't want to or even if I don't like to, I must be, I must be accepting. Because I took this work or this job, I must know to be responsible for my actions. I should be taking care of them because that is one of my responsibilities and duties as a teacher.

PT7: as a teacher, you should be a role model in the classroom. Starting with you, you should have acceptance from students with special needs. With that, you are going to lead your other students to do the same, your normal students in the classroom to accept those with special needs.

PT8: g you need to apply different strategies in what you've learned in the past, and do not wait anymore that the learner, in the middle of the semester, would come and say, " Ma'am I'll drop out of school because I can't understand the lesson anymore." So, it's like, it isn't a good feeling as a teacher because it would mean that the purpose of education was not met, which is it should be accessible to all. That's just it, no children are left behind.

PT9: I'm a teacher, that is my obligation to you know be open to these kinds of things and to try to be of help to these students. It's not a matter of like or of my preference or whether I'm accepting because that's already a given

PT10: It is already the service of the teacher to provide quality education to them. So, it doesn't mean that they have impairments and that they would be treated unfairly. It should be that they are treated fairly by the teacher.

Sense of belonging

The fourth theme is the "sense of belonging" brought about by the question "What concerns do you imagine you would face in having a class with special learners?", "If you were ever to have or handle a classroom, in the future, that had special learners, how do you imagine yourself to act?", "How important do you think inclusive education is in our education system? Do you think it's necessary that we must implement or is it just something that can be optional?". The prospective teachers emphasized a lot how inclusive education would give that sense of belonging to all students; that inclusion is good as it does not let students feel alienated as they are all part of regular classes. However, situations like bullying and discrimination may be the drawbacks to this endeavor of belonging but the PTs did share some of their views on how to deal with those scenarios and make it so that all students do have that sense of belonging within the classroom. These are the participants that brought up the idea

PT1: So, if there is the mix up with the regular students, right inclusive education, they would be allowed to mingle and to not make them think they are disabled; that they are able also as much as the other kids or the other students.

PT2: if there are misunderstandings, between the class I must make the whole class understand the situation. Because some students will have this confusion as to why they must put these kinds of students like this and that in this classroom. Where all of us are normal and just this one classmate only has this kind of disability. So, for them to avoid this confusion and discrimination toward these special learners, I must explain to them what inclusive education is and why we must accept these kinds of learners inside our classroom so that they will be more understanding as to why are we accepting special learners inside the classroom. So, with that, we must clear things up with the whole class to avoid discrimination and confusion.

PT4: I'd go for maybe a mix of approaches. Because knowing that they are, different, different capacities to learn and different personalities and attitudes in the classroom so maybe better if approaches are mixed

PT6: I must think of a lot of strategies and a lot of games every day. I need to you know I need to attend my classes with a smile on my face, I need to be active, I need to play with them and in the process of that, they were learning that game, in that playfulness. So yeah, I think that would be it I would be like, I would make them feel like they're at home, that this classroom is also for them, that they don't have to feel left out, that they still belong here and they do deserve it.

PT7: I think first, if I were to ever put them in groups in activities, it would be good to group the special learners with the others so that they are mixed. For example, in one group, there will be fast learners as well as special learners. It's like not all those who are capable or smart; I will mix them, so it is diverse.

PT8:It would be difficult to have a setup where they would be alienated by their classmates because of their different abilities. So, I think that to raise awareness in kids in the classroom that there are different people and people have different needs and preferences and always treat people with kindness and respect because, despite their abilities, these people are worthy of respect. We are all people, and we have our dignity as a person.

PT9: you need to know, for a welcoming, for letting these, letting people with special needs feel welcomed to our society because since way back then they are often the ones in the minority group. they are often the ones who are discriminated against by people, and I think that that would need some improvement

Sub Themes

One of the main concerns brought up in the literature was the idea that teachers would tend to have negative attitudes toward inclusion when there is a lack of training or exposure to it. But with the PT's responses, even with the little education they receive on inclusive education, they still had optimistic responses. Such as.

PT8: I think it would be a challenge because, in our second year of education here in our college of teacher education, only concepts were given to us. There's no concrete experience to back that up. So, it's just theory. So, I think if I were in the classroom, this would be put into practice. And then I think it is needed to read and update the strategies. I think I need to read more strategies to be able

to accommodate. We need to because they are our students. We owe it to them to give them the best possible education

That is probably going to be challenging for me because we don't have field base experience with that. Maybe the theories that were taught and we learned are not going to be applicable or not effective. So how is that then? It's like you're empty-handed when you arrive at your class. You're doing the best that you can but it's still not effective. So, like really update your knowledge, to read more, and if there is training, Avail of those training because it will not just help you to understand children, but it will be a big difference if you can apply what you've learned in the classroom. So yeah, I think if there is training, really get those training and yeah, update yourself on current educational trends or strategies and try to apply.

PT9: I would try my best to you know help facilitate these students. But I would expect that it would be hard, ... I know that it's going to be hard, it's going to be tedious, and the work will be like twice the effort. Because these are not the usual students that I would be handling as they have unique needs. I would be struggling a bit because I'm not that exposed to matters with, matters... of how to handle special needs learners, but that could still be fixed, I think. If there are enough seminars and training and all that

I still lack the training to handle these special needs learners and how I would overcome these obstacles is to take seminars, to take the training you know to better equip myself on dealing with these kinds of students, to better facilitate and to better serve them inside the classroom

Then, qualities such as creativity and patience were the most mentioned qualities needed by a teacher. Then some other qualities mentioned were flexibility, compassion, kindness, caring, understanding, open-mindedness, being approachable, proactiveness, having a sense of equity, and going the extra mile to help all students; these qualities are recognized by the PTs are needed when teaching in an inclusive classroom.

PT1: very creative. not only in the way she does things in her class. think it is being creative... I mean as regards the approach; how that teacher can deal with the students

PT2: a teacher should have this creativity so that the learning process will not be boring.

PT10: Creative in the way that the students will not be bored with the activities given. We already know that they can be slow or that they may have deficiencies in their behavior. So, if the teacher is creative, they will learn more or pay attention more to the activities given by the teacher.

PT6: I think you must be patient. must be patient about it because of course not all students with learning difficulties can be easily taught things. It could take a while to teach them and also it goes the same with students who don't have any learning difficulties. we need the patience to teach them you know to make them learn and to understand the certain concepts we teach them

PT8: the most important trait is your flexibility as a teacher. If you are flexible, if you see that the child with special needs was struggling to cope with their peers or to get the subject lesson, it is important to be flexible as a teacher for you to accommodate immediately their needs. And proactiveness, you need to expect that there are children that have various needs. So, prepare the materials in advance, like having recordings, if possible, and provide handouts if the child has a hearing impairment. Be prepared for all scenarios you may encounter in the field

PT3: a teacher should have a sense of equity. students with special needs. It's uh it is obvious that the students do not have the same abilities and capabilities, so when we say a teacher should have a sense of equity, it doesn't mean equality, but you must give the act of... the effort to those who need it, especially for those who are... those students with disabilities. you're not going to give everyone as one size fits all but you're going to give more effort to those in need so that is what it means to have a sense of equity

And finally, concerns such as bullying, discrimination, miscommunication, and how students would perform were brought up and should be some of the things that the PTs would look out for and prepare for.

PT1: Bullying and this fooling of children with special needs since they know that they are special. the regular kids, they are taking an opportunity to fool them and that's I think, one main concern that I would face

PT2: there would be some misunderstanding between the class. There would be fights and I think that it is inevitable, especially when students are not open to these kinds of ideas, to have these special needs classmates.

Conclusion and Discussion

The focus of the research was to determine the beliefs and attitudes of prospective language teachers at Western Mindanao State University towards the idea of inclusive education. From the examined data, it was found that all the participating PTs found inclusive education to be a positive educational approach; often emphasizing the idea of equal education given to all, despite the students' differences. Inclusion was seen as an education that will move us to the future as our

current society now is aiming for equality and praising the idea of diversity. The findings revealed a trend whereby prospective language teachers uphold positive beliefs toward inclusion because of the sense of duty one has as a teacher. That no matter the circumstance, a teacher's main purpose is to teach and so there should be no discrimination toward learners. Teachers are to be the ones responsible for adjusting and catering to each learner's needs.

The findings within the data correspond to the research by Bariffe and Pitta (2021), where the teachers also manifested pro-inclusive beliefs and found inclusion to be generally beneficial to both teacher and learner. Some PT's responses, specifically PT8 and 9's discussion on the lack of training also agree with the study of Budiyanto et al. (2020) and that this should be the goal institutions should cover; to prepare PTs by providing sufficient training. The study also revealed that the PTs did not have any concerns with the different factors brought up by Jenson (2018) and still had mostly positive attitudes despite concerns being brought up. Again, the sense of duty as a teacher was the main factor in the PT's enthusiasm.

There was found to be no evident difference in the PT's beliefs and attitudes based on the language each was majoring in. Most of their answers were similar across language majors, all having pro-inclusive beliefs and believing it is the teacher's responsibility to provide education for all. There was also no evident effect of their past experiences on their current beliefs and attitudes toward inclusion. Moreover, because of the background information they received during their 2nd year in teacher education, the PTs were more inclined to the idea of inclusion and saw it to be a good educational approach; they now understood the purpose of their past encounters with special classmates. Many of the PTs expressed that they were thankful for their introduction to inclusive education back in their 2nd year and that it would be better that they expand their knowledge on this. It is also observed that the idea of PTS on special learners in inclusive education is mostly limited to those that have disabilities or behavioral problems only rather than what was brought up by Tyagi (2016). This proves that sufficient knowledge of inclusion should be emphasized in institutions.

Finally, the PTs expressed various thoughts on inclusion during their final comments, expressing how inclusive education should be a subject or topic considered a necessity in teacher education and programs. As our world is rapidly growing and turning global, the number of diverse students would increase, and focusing on a fixed, "one size fits all" approach will not help develop quality education for our children.

However, it must be recognized that this study is limited to the data gathered amongst the prospective teachers at Western Mindanao State University. Therefore, it is highly recommended that further studies should be conducted, preferable with a larger sample size and across multiple institutions. This will allow comparisons between different educational programs of different schools, which could provide various insights into what other attitudes or beliefs prospective teachers may have.

References:

1. Alieto, E., Abequibel, B., & Ricohermoso, C. (2020). An Investigation on Digital and Print Reading Attitudes: Samples from Filipino Preservice Teachers from a Non-metropolitan-based University. *Asian EFL*, 27(4.3), 278-311.
2. Armstrong, A.C., Armstrong, D., & Spandagou, I. (2010). Inclusive Education International Policy & Practice. *SAGE Publications*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446221990>
3. Bariffe, C., & Pitta, E. (2021). Early Childhood Teachers' Beliefs and Practices About the Inclusion of Children with Autism in Jamaica: An exploration Study. *International Journal of Special Education*, 36(2), 66-77.
4. Budiyanto, B., Sheehy, K., Kaye, H., & Rofiah, K. (2020). Indonesian Educators' Knowledge and Beliefs about Teaching Children with Autism. *Athens Journal of Education*, 7(1), 77-98. <https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.7-1-4>
5. Butial, F. J., Delos Santos, M., Juanito, J., Francisco, J. M., Abequibel, B., Deran, J. J., Toribio, C., Mohadali, S. & Alieto, E. (2022) Modular Teaching during Tumultuous Times: Challenges and Coping Strategies of Special Education Teachers. *SPECIALUSIS UGDYMAS / SPECIAL EDUCATIO*, 1 (43), 7358-7389.
6. Buslon, J. , Alieto, E., Pahulaya, V., & Reyes, A. (2020). Gender Divide in Attitude towards Chavacano and Cognition towards Mother Tongue among Prospective Language Teachers . *Asian EFL*, 27 (3.1), 41-64.
7. Dictionary, C. (2022,). Definition of Attitude. *Cambridge Dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/attitude>
8. Dela Rama, J.M., Sabasales, M., Antonio, A., Ricohermoso, C., Torres, J., Devanadera, A., Tulio, C., & Alieto, E. (2020). Virtual Teaching as the 'New Norm': Analyzing Science Teachers' Attitude toward Online Teaching, Technological Competence and Access. *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, 29(7), 12705-12715.
9. Go Silk, B., Medriano, R., Dela Cruz, S.B., Deran, J.J., Alieto, E., Abdon, M., Rillo, R., & Lucas, R.I. (2020). Cognition toward the Mother Tongue, Attitude toward English, Chavacano,

- and Filipino: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach with Bootstrap Analysis. *Asian ESP*, 16(1.2), 5-28.
10. Horzum, T. & Izci, K. (2018). Preservice Turkish Teachers' Views and Perceived Competence Related to Inclusive Education. *Journal of Education and E-Learning Research*, 5(2). 131-143. DOI: 10.20448/journal.509.2018.52.131.143
 11. Jacinto, M.J., & Alieto, E. (2020). Virtual Teaching Attitude and Technological Competence among English as Second Language (ESL) Teachers. *Asian EFL*, 27(4.4.), 403-432.
 12. Jenson, K. (2018). A Global Perspective on Teacher Attitudes Towards Inclusion: Literature Review. *Education Resources Information Center*.
 13. Jones, J. (2020). Attitudes of Primary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education in Belize: A Systematic Review. *Education Resources Information Center*.
 14. Jury, M., Perrin, A.L., Rohmer, O., & Desombre, C. (2021) Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education: An Exploration of the Interaction Between Teachers' Status and Students' Type of Disability Within the French Context. *Frontiers in Education*, 6. 1-7 <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.655356>
 16. Kozleski, E.B., & Yu, I. (2021). Inclusive Education. *Oxford Bibliographies Online*. DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199756810-0162
 17. Lao, K.A., Lao, H., Siason, V., Cabangcala R., Cadapan, E., & Alieto, E. (2022). Attitude towards Inclusive Education (IE) among Prospective Teachers: Is there Gender Polarization? *International Journal of Special Education*, 37(3). 4946-4958.
 18. Lim-Ramos, S., Francisco, W., Leduna, N.A., Nuñez, M.R., Pabraquel, M.K., Deran, J.J., & Alieto, E. (2020). Substituting English with a Local Language: Examining Parents' belief toward Chavacano as Language of Instruction. *Asian EFL Journal*, 27(1), 177-195.
 19. Massouti, A. (2021). Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives on Their Preparation for Inclusive Teaching: Implications for Organizational Change in Teacher Education. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2021.1.10611>
 21. Merriam-Webster. (2022). Inclusion. *Merriam-Webster*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inclusion>
 22. Mumbing, L., Abequibel, B., Buslon, J., & Alieto, E. (2021). Digital Education, the New Frontier: Determining Attitude and Technological Competence of Language Teachers from a Developing Country. *Asian ESP Journal*, 17(4.3), 300-328.

23. Pil, A., Tubo, M., Abequibel, B., Peromingan, R., & Alieto, E. (2022). Special Learners in Regular Classes: An Attitudinal Investigation among Prospective Early Childhood Education Teachers. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 14(3), 1116-1130.
24. Şahan, G. (2021). An Evaluation of Pre-Service Teachers' Competences and Views Regarding Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 9(1), 150-158.<http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.9n.1p.150>
26. Schmidt, M., & Vrhovnik, K. (2015). Attitudes of Teachers Towards the Inclusion of Children With Special Needs in Primary and Secondary Schools . *Croatian Review of Rehabilitation Research*, 51(2). 16-30.
27. Siason, V., Caspillo, W. & Alieto, E. (2015). Attitude towards Inclusive Education: A Survey among Prospective Teachers from Non-metropolitan Areas. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 14 (2). 6103-6111.
28. Singh, R.K., Shiba, S.,& Saurav, K. (2020). “A Study of Attitude of Teachers towards Inclusive Education.” *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(1), pp. 189-197. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9i1.3511>
30. Somblingo,R., & Alieto, E. (2019). English language attitude among Filipino prospective language teachers: An analysis through the Mentalist theoretical lens. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 15(2), 23-41.
31. Special Education Act. (2019). Senate Bill 1150. *Senate of the Philippines*.https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lis/bill_res.aspx?congress=18&q=SBN-1150
32. Tyagi, G. (2016). Role of Teacher in Inclusive Education. *International Journal of Education and Applied Research*,6 (1), 115-116.
33. University of Reading. (2022). Values, beliefs and attitudes. *FutureLearn*. <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/supporting-learningsecondary/0/steps/58621#:~:text=People's%20values%2C%20beliefs%20and%20attitudes,going%20to%20change%20my%20mind%E2%80%9D>
34. Winzer, M. (1993). The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration. *Gallaudet University Press*.
35. Yell, M.L., Rogers, D., & Rogers, E.L. (1998). The Legal History of Special Education: What a Long, Strange Trip It's Been. *Remedial and Special Education*, 19(4), 219–228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325980190040>