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KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers on inclusive education and academic performance of children with special needs in public elementary schools in the District of Bay. It utilized the descriptive-correlational and descriptive survey method to test significant relationship among teachers' knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education and pupils formative and periodical test performance. The respondents of the study are the selected inclusive education teachers or the SPED teachers of the Bay District and Division of Laguna. The statistical treatment applied are r- value, p-value, mean percentage and frequency. It sought to identify and answer the mean level of the demographic profile of the respondents and knowledge, skills and attitude on inclusive education and academic performance of pupils with special needs in terms of formative and periodical test.

The study has proven that there is significant relationship between and among the knowledge and attitude of the respondents and inclusive education. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study it is highly recommended that: The schools practicing inclusive education must prioritize teacher applicants with experience in dealing with students with special needs. The school administration must provide more trainings in inclusive education to general educators who are teaching students with special needs. There must be more evident collaboration among the local community education committee, parents, teachers and the school in addressing the concerns of inclusive education in the school level.

Keywords

Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Teachers, Pupils, Performance, Inclusive Education

1. Introduction

Education may be defined as the process of imparting knowledge, skills, values, norms and culture from one generation to another in a society. In line with this, it is said that “education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life” (Chaula, 2014).

Teachers have the unique privilege of spending months at a time getting to know the students who make up their classes, with all their abilities, talents, strengths and needs. One of the joys of teaching career has been to witness the way the fabric of a class dynamic is woven from the range of abilities of my students. It has been an experience that the diversity of children’s abilities regardless of who they are brings richness to their relationships with each other and with their teacher, making each class unique and interesting in its own way (Murphy, 2014).

According to UNESCO as cited by Chaula (2014) that inclusion is associated with commitment to the term “*Education for all*” by identifying the requirement and urgency of providing education for all children, youth and adults with Special Needs Education. “The UNESCO continues to push for the institutionalization of inclusionary practices in more countries with the publication of, *The Right to Education for Persons with Disabilities: Towards Inclusion*. Inclusion International also joined the movement toward inclusion by publishing *Better Education for All: A Global Report*” (UNESCO, 2009).

UNESCO (2009) “elaborates on how an inclusive education system should be by stating that: an ‘inclusive’ education system can only be formed if normal schools become more inclusive. This is to say, if they improve at educating all children in their communities. The Conference declared that “regular schools with an inclusive direction are the most active means of fighting discriminatory attitudes, building welcoming societies, establishing an inclusive society and attaining education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to many children and improve competence and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the whole education system”.

It was stressed that every child has an ultimate right to have education, and need to be given the chance to attain and maintain satisfactory level of learning. Every child has unique features, interests, learning needs and abilities. Education systems should be designed and programs need to be implemented in consideration of a wide diversity of these characteristics and needs (Chaula, 2014).

Inclusive Education intends “to introduce the positive impact on the approaches to education at a setting where both the disabled and non-disabled children learn and socialize with and among each other, discounting the fears of having an environment of stigma, exclusion, and various forms of negligence” (Lampropoulou, 2012).

In line with the “Department’s thrust in providing quality and inclusive basic education for all, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to deliver the needed educational interventions for learners with certain exceptionalities through its Special Education (SPED) program. The SPED program of DepEd offers a holistic approach in providing to the needs of learners with various exceptionalities. This program warrants that learners with special needs will have access to quality education by giving them their individual and unique learning needs” (DepEd).

1.1 Background of the Study

As cited by Muega, (2016) “that very little is known about the practice of educational inclusion in the Philippines. The lack of a shared approach to education in the country, one that is open to all students, recommends that a strong conceptual basis for inclusive education (IE) remains to be established. This lack of preparation for a sound practice of IE makes it difficult to articulate the rational extent of involvement members of the school community must have in the

education of children with special needs (CSN). A move to effect high-quality inclusion in Philippine schools is said to be underway”.

Special Education Act (Philippine Senate Bill 3002) of 2011 “an act instituting inclusive education through special education in all private and public elementary and secondary schools nationwide for children and youth with special needs and establishment of the bureau of special education creating the implementing machinery thereof, providing guidelines for government financial assistance incentives and support for other purposes” (senate.gov.ph).

Knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers are the most important variables in the education of children with disabilities. Although the DepEd program about inclusive education was already implemented a year ago but majority of public teachers are not well oriented in this program, because it was observed to have discrimination between regular pupils versus special children. Through the Department of Education Memo No. 72, s 2009, DepEd Order No. 26, series of 1997, these children were given the opportunity to be included in the education program.

Dapudong (2014) stated that “The success of inclusion or organized placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms largely depends on teachers’ attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and their knowledge on how to properly educate them. In quite a number of studies, the attitude of teachers towards educating students with SEN has been to put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive. If mainstream teachers do not accept the education of these pupils as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the special educational needs teacher) takes responsibility for these pupils and will organize covert segregation in the school (e.g. the special class). This Inclusive Education bridges the Department of Education’s (DepEd) Education for All (EFA) goal”.

In the Philippines, Chapter II of Title II of the Magna Carta for Disable persons or RA 7277 Section 12, says that “The State shall take into consideration the special requirements of disabled persons in the formulation of educational programs and policies.” Moreover, Sec. 14 of RA 7277 also says “that the State shall establish, maintain, and support complete, adequate and integrated system of special education for visually, impaired, hearing, impaired, mentally retarded persons, and other types of exceptional children in all regions of the country” (NCDA, n.d.)

Department of Education Order No. 72, s. 2009 strongly addressed the urgency of having the children with special needs to receive appropriated education within a regular or inclusive setting. Inclusive Education embraces the philosophy of accepting all children regardless of race, size, shape, color, disability or ability with support from school staff, parents and community.

Dapudong (2014) “said in his study that the success of inclusion or organized placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms largely depends on teachers’ attitudes towards students with special educational needs (SEN) and their knowledge on how to properly educate them. In quite a number of studies, the attitude of teachers towards educating students with SEN has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive. If mainstream teachers do not accept the education of these students as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the special educational needs teacher) takes responsibility for these students and will organize covert segregation in the school (e.g. the special class)”.

Thus, there is a strong need for the educational system to consider in the Institutional Support Plan to include and emphasize concerns Inclusive Education (IE). In fact, Landasan (2017) based in the findings of her study on Inclusive Education recommended that the teachers need to attend trainings on special education. According to her, there should be inputs such as support of parents, guidance counsellors, nurses, teachers and the DepEd district offices should include in their action plans trainings for the teachers who are handling children with special needs. She also emphasized that teachers must attend seminars and trainings in IE. Landasan (2017) also mentioned that additional variables like water and sanitation, student set, text book ratio, parent teacher collaboration should also be considered.

Significantly, Landasan (2017) recommended that teachers’ knowledge, skills, attitude (KSA) must be given appropriate measures to further enhance the skills and academic performance of the pupils with special needs.

Meanwhile, in the District of Bay, Division of Laguna there are already special children attending regular classes since 1990. It was organized initially at Barangay Dila. Special Education Classes in Bay Laguna started with low number of enrollees but continue to grow in number in the years of 2000. Therefore, with its enriched history since early 1990’s until at present in the said district it is only but proper to sustain the needs of Inclusive Education and continue to contribute in the development and stability of the program.

With these in mind, the researcher is motivated to conduct a study on Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Teachers on Inclusive Education and Academic Performance of Children with Special Needs in Bay District as input to Institutional Support Plan.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of Vygotsky, the Learning and Socio Cultural Theory. This theory looks at the significant contributions that society makes to human development. Further, this theory stresses there is interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live.

Another theory that this study is anchored is the Azjen's Theory (1999) "wherein the planned behavior, a widely used model to determine behavior arising from attitudes and has been used in research involving attitudes toward individuals with disabilities". "Assumptions derived from the theory are that theoretical variables of behavioral intention, that is, attitude toward the behavior, the subjective norm and perceived behavior control, should come together to estimate intention". The model suggests that attitudes toward a behavior may be influenced by past experiences, previous knowledge and newly acquired knowledge. "Attitudes play a significant role in determining behavior; it is therefore important to ascertain the factors shaping the attitudes of mainstream teachers as they attempt to include students with disabilities". More specifically, this study is based on the premise that the attitudes of mainstream teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities are influenced by past experiences and previous knowledge (Valenzuela, 2013).

This study presents the conceptual framework in identifying and determining the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Teachers on Inclusive Education and Academic Performance of Children with Special Needs in Bay District: An Input to Institutional Support Plan.

On the other hand, Figure 1 shows the independent variables which are the knowledge, skills and attitude of the teachers handling the students with special needs while the dependent variables include the institutional support plan and the academic performance of the students when it comes to post test and formative evaluation.

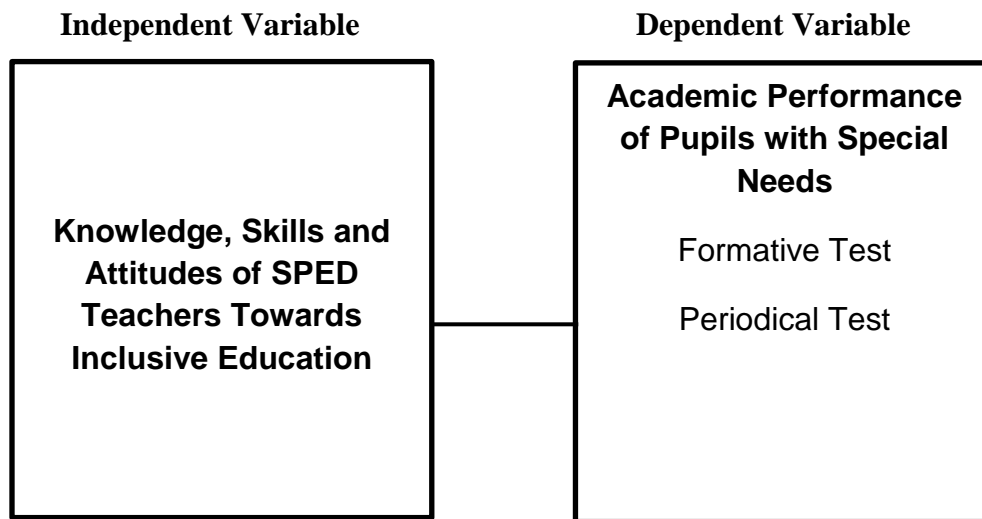


Figure 2: *Research Paradigm*

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study determined the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Teachers on Inclusive Education and the academic performance of Children with Special Needs in Bay District.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the socio-demographic profile of the teacher respondents in Public Elementary Schools in the District of Bay in terms of:
 - Age
 - Sex
 - length of service
 - position
 - Educational attainment
 - Teaching experience to pupils w/ special needs
 - Trainings attended
2. What is the mean level of knowledge, skills and attitude of teachers towards inclusive education?
3. What is the mean level of academic performance of pupils with special needs in terms of formative test and periodical test?

4. Is there a significant relationship among knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a teachers towards inclusive education and pupils' formative test performance?
5. Is there a significant relationship among knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a teachers towards inclusive education and pupils' periodical test performance?
6. Is there a significant relationship among the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education?

1.4 Hypothesis

The hypothesis below was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

There is no significant relationship among knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a teachers towards inclusive education and pupils' formative test performance of the pupils.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The researcher employed the descriptive correlational and descriptive survey method of research with the questionnaire checklist which is adopted and used as the main tool for the collection of data.

This study determined and analyzed the Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSA) of teachers (general education teachers and SPED teachers) on Inclusive Education.

It also tested whether or not there exists a significant relationship between the teachers' socio-demographic characteristics profile and their KSAs in Inclusive Education.

2.2 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the public elementary teachers (the general education teachers and the SPED teachers) in Bay District, Division of Laguna. The special education teachers were those who are currently teaching in the schools such that they gave valid and reliable responses on the school vision, policy implementation and efficient delivery of services in relation to Inclusive Education Program. A total of 176 respondents, teachers (General Education and SPED) were used in this study.

2.3 Sampling Technique

This study used total enumeration sampling technique. In total enumeration sampling technique, the researcher used her judgment and an appropriate strategy in selecting the subjects who comprised the sample and who meet best the purposes of the study. This kind of sampling

technique used the researcher's judgment to select a sample that provided the data that were needed. Total enumeration sample consists of individuals who have special qualifications of some sort or are deemed representative on the basis of prior evidence.

2.4 Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a survey questionnaire which is divided into two parts: the First part is the profile of the teachers: general education teachers, SPED teachers; and the Second part contains statements and test questions that will gauge the teachers' Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes towards Inclusive Education. The research instrument was adopted from the study of Gerald S. Mthetwa's (2008) study on Principal's Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Inclusive Education: Implications for Curriculum and Assessment. Likert conversion scale was used to interpret the data obtained and analyzed. Meanwhile, to measure the inclusive educator skills, they were given a set of 20-item diagnostic test adapted from the Pearson Education, Inc. (2017) Washington Educator Skills Tests.

2.5 Research Procedure

The researcher observed the following procedure in the conduct of the study. The researcher sent letter of request addressed to the school principal and District Supervisor to allow the concerned teachers to participate as respondents of the study. With the approval granted, the researcher collaborated with the head teachers to school provide guidance in accomplishing the research questionnaire.

The administrators' and general education and special education teachers' demographic profile such as name, age, gender, educational qualifications and years of teaching experience. Trainings attended towards inclusive education and teaching experience to handle pupils with special needs were considered to obtain the desired information and data. The teacher respondents were given one week to accomplish the questionnaire. Deadline for the data collection was set by the researcher after which organization, analysis and interpretation of data will follow.

2.6 Statistical Treatment of Data

In interpreting the data, the researcher utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics. As descriptive measures, frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used. These tools were used to describe the socio demographic profile of the respondents and their mean level of knowledge, skills and attitude towards inclusive education. To determine if there is

significant relationship between and among variables under study, chi square test and person product moment of correlation coefficient were used.

Percentage mean was also used to determine the attitude of the teachers towards inclusive education following the range on table 3. Mean percentage scores were used to describe the academic performance of the students with special needs in terms of their periodical test and formative evaluation scores.

In terms of percentage and frequency there are three knowledge level which were indicated in the tables. The statistical range is 12-15 the description was high; 8-11 has the description of average and 0-7 which is low.

T-test for the test significance was used to determine the significant relationship between and among the given variables.

Statistics Software was used to calculate for the Spearman value and for statistical analysis of the study.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Profile of the Respondents

- 32.39% of the age of the respondents range from 30- 38 years old with a frequency of 57. Meanwhile 5.11% of the respondents are under 57-65 years of age.
- 91.48% of the distribution of the respondents were composed of female. Landasan (2017) cited Suleymanov (2014) “that inclusive Education (IE) is a total reorganization of education system in terms of pedagogy and curriculum. These are viewed as intentions to welcome all diversities such as gender, nationality, culture, language, academic achievements, and disabilities. IE also carries the same view stating that inclusion is an inclusive society schools, kindergartens, and other institutions welcomes people with social care of any gender”.
- 58.52% of the respondents range from 1 to 10 years in service and only 9% ranges from 31 to 40 years in service. Dapudong (2014) “affirmed in his study that teachers with experience in teaching students, particularly those with special needs, intensify their confidence to teach them. This is likely to grow which invariably alters their negative attitudes. International school teachers perceive that their professional knowledge and skills were inadequate to effectively teach students with disabilities in regular schools.

Their inability to meet the needs of those special needs students may contribute fear and concern towards a reduction in the academic success”.

- 65.91% of the respondents are teacher I while only 2.84% are master teachers. Aguilar (2015) cited that phenomenon of inclusion, as specifically experienced by non — special education teachers or who are general education teachers teaching in inclusive faced challenges in educating children with special needs, internalizing daily guiding principles, dealing with existing difficulties in class while teaching an Inclusive Classroom.
- 74% of the respondents graduated BS Degree, 20 % with units in Masters and only 6% graduated with Master’s Degree. Ainscow (2007) “stressed that teachers need to see what inclusive teaching actually looks like and explore ideas with someone who can help them understand the difference between what they are doing and what they aspire to do through continuously educating oneself for professional growth”.
- It was showed above in the figure that 93% of the distribution of the respondents has no experienced in terms of handling pupils with special needs and only 7% are experienced teachers. The study reveals that although there are many challenges a general educator faces in inclusion they did it was proven that teaching experience showed that inclusion would bring positive effects on children with special needs as well as the adjusted students in the classroom.
- 82% of the respondents were not trained relevantly in terms of inclusive education and only 18 % were trained. Thus, “inclusion of students with special needs into regular schools is now one of the most important issues facing the education community both nationally and internationally. In order to address this issue there is widespread acceptance that teacher training institutions must ensure that new teachers are trained to teach effectively in classrooms where there are students with a variety of learning needs”.

3.2 Respondent’s self-reported knowledge in inclusive education

The Respondent’s self-reported knowledge in inclusive education wherein the statement in item number 7 has the highest correct response which is 99.4%. It was found out that the respondent’s self-reported knowledge is achieved also by collaborating to other professional service providers. It was followed by item number 2 which has 96% correct response. It stated

that the by adjusting their teaching creative learning environment can be facilitated. The statement in item number 12 has the lowest correct response which is 39.2%. It was found out that the respondent's self-reported knowledge in inclusive education is an indication to implement a series of seminars and trainings about inclusive education.

In 2017 Landasan cited Torombe (2013) that "education for persons with special needs should form fundamental part of national planning, curriculum development and school organization." Muega (2016) stressed that "inclusive teaching is not a single person's job, teachers, parents, and administrators must communicate and work together. Participants see the need for communicating and collaborating with the other members of the school community, including those specialists whose findings are vital to the preparation of a sound individualized education program. Not a single participant even hinted that he or she could work alone effectively".

3.3 Knowledge Level of the Respondents in Inclusive Education

The knowledge level of the respondents in inclusive education indicates that 53.98% of the respondents are in the average level in terms of knowledge. However 23.30% of the respondents fall under low knowledge level in terms of inclusive education and 22.73 is the high level of knowledge when it comes to inclusive education.

In the study of in inclusive education, the teachers' role necessitates flexible thinking in terms of being resourceful and innovative to accommodate diversity among learners with varying disabilities under their care. Teachers' roles become certainties when the skills and knowledge of inclusion they have acquired through formal training in teacher-educational institutions and their own personal characteristics meet their understanding of children with special needs' diverse learning requirements. In other words, a success in inclusive education in a country depends largely on the capacity of the teachers' skills and knowledge in inclusive education (Landasan 2017; Bourke, 2010).

3.4 Respondent's self-reported attitude towards inclusive education

The respondent's self-reported attitude towards inclusive education, 88% of the respondents agreed that the students with special needs should be given every opportunity to function in a regular class. Meanwhile 86% of the respondents disagreed that, Special schools for the children with special educational needs are the most appropriate places for them to be educated.

3.5 Attitude of the respondents towards inclusive education

Table 6: Attitude of the Respondents towards Inclusive Education

Attitude	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Positive	78	44.32
Neutral	67	38.07
Negative	31	17.61
Total	176	100.00

8 – 10 – Positive

5 – 10 – Neutral

0 – 4 – Negative

Table 5 shows that children with special needs should be given opportunity to function in a regular class. In the study of Murphy (2014), the terms “integration” and “mainstreaming” are also used when referring to inclusive education practices. Indeed, the shift to the term “inclusion” also sometimes implies a change in practice and perception. Teachers stated that students always and often progress at their own pace and develop more positive attitude in their classroom having been included in a regular class.

3.6 Skill level of the respondents in inclusive education

94.89% of the respondents has low skill level when it comes to inclusive education. There is 5.11% of the respondents which has average level in terms of skills in IE and 0% of the respondents fall under high level of skill levels in terms of inclusive education.

3.7 Formative test mean percentage score of the pupils with disability

Table 7: Formative test mean percentage score of the pupils with disability

Pupils	Formative Test MPS	Interpretation	Rank
Hearing Impaired	65.50	Average	3
Intellectual Disabled	68.50	Average	2
Visual Impaired	69.00	Average	1

As presented in Table 7 disability showed that pupils with hearing impairment has a formative MPS of 65.50 which is average; intellectually disabled has a formative of 68.50 which is average and the visually impaired has 69.00 MPS in the formative test and also interpreted as average.

3.8 Test of significant relationship among teacher's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education and pupils' formative test performance

Table 8: Test of significant relationship among teacher's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education and pupils' formative test performance

Variables	r-value	p – value	Strength of Relationship
Knowledge	0.247	0.038*	Low
Skills	0.707	0.000**	High
Attitude	0.992	0.000**	Very High

* Significant at .05 level

**Significant at .01 level

The knowledge has an r-value of 0.247, p value of 0.038 and has the 'low as the strength of relationship. While the skills has an r value of 0.707 and a p value of 0.000 and the strength of relationship is high. The attitude has an r-value of 0.992 and a p-value of 0.000 which has a very high strength of relationship. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

3.9 Test of significant relationship among teacher's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education and pupils' periodical test performance

Table 9: Test of significant relationship among teacher's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education and pupils' periodical test performance

Variables	r-value	p – value	Strength of Relationship
Knowledge	0.029	0.808	Negligible
Skills	0.118	0.327	Negligible
Attitude	0.703	0.000**	High

**Significant at .01 level

The knowledge has an r-value of 0.029 and p value of 0.808 and has negligible as the strength of relationship. While the skills has an r value of 0.118 and a p value of 0.327 and the strength of relationship is negligible. The attitude has an r-value of 0.703 and a p-value of 0.000 which has a high strength of relationship. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

3.10 Test of significant relationship among respondent's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education

Table 10: Test of significant relationship among respondent's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education

Pairs of Variables	X ² -value	Df	p – value	Remarks
Knowledge and Attitude	26.472	4	.000	Significant
Knowledge and Skills	2.772	2	.256	Not Significant
Attitude and Skills	1.921	2	.383	Not Significant

*Significant at .05 level

Test of significant relationship among respondent's knowledge, attitude, and skills in inclusive education showed that there is significant relationship among the knowledge and attitude and inclusive education since it has a p- value of .000. Meanwhile there is no significant relationship among the knowledge and skills, attitude and skills of respondents and inclusive education. "Inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs and on the resources available to them. In quite a number of studies, the attitude of teachers on educating pupils with special needs has been put forward as a critical factor in making schools more inclusive. If mainstream teachers do not accept the education of these pupils as an integral part of their job, they will try to ensure that someone else (often the special education teacher) takes responsibility for these pupils and will organize covert segregation in the school" (e.g. the special class) (Landasan, 2017).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

Inclusive education has been an institutionalized both locally and internationally to students with special needs. The study has proven that there is significant relationship between and among the knowledge and attitude of the respondents and inclusive education. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected. Meanwhile, there is no significant relationship among knowledge and skills, attitude and skills towards inclusive education, therefore the other hypotheses are *partly upheld*.

Therefore, Landasan (2017) asserted that teachers need to attend trainings on special education. According to her, there should be inputs such as support of parents, guidance

counsellors, nurses, teachers and the DepEd district offices should include in their action plans trainings for the teachers who are handling children with special needs. She also emphasized that teachers must attend seminars and trainings in IE. Further she also mentioned that additional variables like water and sanitation, student set, text book ratio, parent teacher collaboration should also be considered.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study the following recommendations were suggested by the researcher:

1. The schools' practicing inclusive education need to prioritize teacher applicants with experience in dealing with students with special needs.
2. The school administration may provide more trainings in inclusive education to general educators who are teaching students with special needs.
3. Collaboration among the local community education committee, parents, teachers and the school in addressing the concerns of inclusive education in the school level is recommended.
4. Professional development such as further study like master's degree in special education need to be considered by the concerned educators.
5. A similar study may be conducted using other research variables and to verify the results of this study.

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