

# Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education Policies and Their Attitudes Toward Learners with Disabilities in Regular Education Settings: Basis for an Action Plan

Lovellyn S. Lumbab<sup>1</sup>, Lilibeth C. Pinili, Dev.Ed.D.<sup>1</sup>, Janine Joy L. Tenerife-Cañete, Dev.Ed.D.<sup>1</sup>, Reyland G. Capuno, Ph.D., Dev.Ed.D.<sup>1</sup>, Regina E. Sito, Dev.Ed.D.<sup>1</sup>, Raymond C. Espina, Ph.D., Dev.Ed.D.<sup>1</sup>, Emerson D. Peteros, Dev.Ed.D.<sup>1</sup>, Marjorie C. Añero, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>  
*Graduate School, Cebu Technological University – Main Campus, Cebu City, Philippines*

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Email of Corresponding Authors: [teacherlovellyn@gmail.com](mailto:teacherlovellyn@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This study examined teachers' awareness of inclusive education policies and their attitudes toward learners with disabilities in regular education settings as basis for an action plan. A descriptive-correlational research design was used, and the study was conducted at Lipata National High School in Minglanilla, Cebu during School Year 2025–2026. Through total enumeration, all 67 qualified general education and subject teachers participated in the study. Data were gathered using an adapted survey questionnaire that measured policy awareness across four dimensions and teacher attitudes across four dimensions. Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to test the relationship between the two variables. Findings showed that teachers had a moderate level of awareness of inclusive education policies and generally positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities. A statistically significant moderate positive relationship was found between policy awareness and teachers' attitudes. The study concluded that teachers' readiness for inclusive education is influenced by their level of policy awareness, although awareness alone is not sufficient to ensure effective inclusive practice. Based on the findings, an action plan was proposed to strengthen teachers' policy awareness and attitudinal readiness toward inclusive education.

**Keywords:** Special Education, Inclusive Education Policy Awareness, Teachers' Attitudes Toward Learners With Disabilities, Descriptive-Correlational, Lipata National High School, Minglanilla, Cebu, Philippines

## 1. Introduction

Inclusive education promotes the right of learners with disabilities to participate in regular education settings with appropriate support, accommodations, and equal learning opportunities. Abantas (2022) emphasizes that such practices are essential for ensuring equitable education in diverse classroom environments. In the Philippine context, national laws such as the Inclusive Education Act of 2022, the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 guide schools and teachers in providing inclusive education (Cabansag, Tadena, & Umali, 2023; Arias, Calago, & Cabanilla, 2023).

However, successful implementation depends not only on policy existence but also on teachers' awareness and attitudes. Ajzen (1991) notes that teacher attitudes and planned behaviors strongly influence how policies are enacted in the classroom, and Savolainen, Malinen, and Schwab (2022) further indicate that positive teacher attitudes foster inclusive learning environments. Crispel and Kasperski (2021), De Arao and Fontanilla (2024), and Donath et al. (2023) highlight that teachers who understand policy provisions, accommodations, and school-level guidelines are better prepared to support learners with disabilities effectively.

At Lipata National High School in Minglanilla, Cebu, the increasing number of learners with disabilities in regular classrooms underscores the need to assess teacher readiness. Gonzaga, Plan, and Aguiro (2024) explain that while SPED centers facilitate inclusion, teachers often face challenges related to training, resources, and confidence in handling learners with diverse needs. This study examined teachers' awareness of inclusive education policies and their attitudes toward learners with disabilities and used the findings to propose an action plan to strengthen inclusive practices at Lipata National High School.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational design to examine teachers' awareness of inclusive education policies and their attitudes toward learners with disabilities. Creswell and Creswell (2022) explain that this design is suitable for

assessing naturally occurring conditions and relationships without manipulation. Bandura (1997) notes that teacher self-efficacy can influence survey responses, further justifying the use of this design to capture meaningful variations among respondents.

## **2.2 Locale of the Study**

The research was conducted at Lipata National High School in Barangay Lipata, Linao, Minglanilla, Cebu. Cabansag, Tadena, and Umali (2023) highlight that schools serving learners with diverse needs, including those with disabilities, provide an appropriate context for studying inclusive education. Arias, Calago, and Cabanilla (2023) also note that SPED centers allow for a comprehensive evaluation of policy awareness and teacher attitudes.

## **2.3 Respondents of the Study**

The respondents included 67 teachers, comprising general education and subject teachers who were directly involved in classroom instruction and inclusive education practices. Macabenta et al. (2023) emphasize that including both general and specialized educators provides a complete picture of teacher readiness. Lindner et al. (2023) also stress that teachers engaged in direct instruction offer the most accurate perspectives on policy and practice.

## **2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

Total enumeration was used, including all qualified teachers during the 2025–2026 school year. De Arao and Fontanilla (2024) recommend this approach for manageable populations to minimize sampling bias, while Donath et al. (2023) note that excluding teachers without direct classroom involvement ensures the reliability of responses.

## **2.5 Research Instrument**

Data were collected using an adapted survey questionnaire divided into three sections: respondent profile, teachers' awareness of policies, and teacher attitudes toward learners with disabilities. The awareness and attitude sections used a five-point Likert scale. Likert (1932) and Crispel and Kasperski (2021) recommend such scales for reliable measurement of subjective attitudes.

## **2.6 Data Gathering Procedure**

Permissions were secured from school authorities, and participants were oriented on the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and voluntary participation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Questionnaires were administered in person, collected, checked for completeness, and prepared for statistical analysis (Esparagoza, 2020).

## **2.7 Data Analysis Techniques**

Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied. Frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation summarized demographics and levels of policy awareness and teacher attitudes. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationship between awareness and attitudes, following the recommendations of Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019) and Field (2018).

## **2.8 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained, participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Data were used solely for academic purposes and reported in aggregate form (World Health Organization, 2020).

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# **3. Results and Discussion**

## **3.1 Profile of the Respondents**

The study involved 67 teacher-respondents from Lipata National High School. Most respondents were female, and the largest age group belonged to the 35–44 age bracket. Most teachers had earned master's units, while a smaller number had completed master's or doctorate degrees. In terms of teaching experience, the largest group had 6–10 years of service, and most respondents held Teacher I and Teacher III positions. Overall, the profile shows that the study gathered data from teachers with varied age, experience, educational background, and professional rank.

## **3.2 Level of Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education Policies**

The findings showed that teachers had a moderate level of awareness of inclusive education policies, with a grand mean of 3.05. Among the components, understanding of rights and accommodations for learners with disabilities obtained the highest mean of 3.50, interpreted as high awareness. Knowledge of inclusive education legislation and familiarity with school-level implementation guidelines were both rated moderate, while awareness of support services and resources obtained the lowest mean of 2.55, interpreted as low awareness. This indicates that teachers understood the basic rights of learners with disabilities but needed stronger orientation on support services, referral systems, resources, and school-level procedures.

### 3.3 Level of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Learners with Disabilities

The findings showed that teachers generally had positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities in regular education settings. They showed positive beliefs about the capability of learners with disabilities, willingness to accommodate learners, and commitment to inclusive classroom practices. However, comfort in interacting with learners with disabilities had the lowest rating, particularly in relation to behavioral, sensory, and intellectual disabilities. This suggests that while teachers supported inclusion, they still needed practical exposure, training, and confidence-building activities.

### 3.4 Significant Relationship Between Policy Awareness and Teachers' Attitudes

The study found a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between inclusive education policy awareness and teachers' attitudes toward learners with disabilities, with a correlation coefficient of 0.619. This means that teachers with higher awareness of inclusive education policies tended to have more positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities. The null hypothesis was rejected, showing that policy awareness and teacher attitudes are meaningfully connected.

### 3.5 Proposed Action Plan

Based on the findings, the study proposed an Inclusive Education Capacity-Building Program for teachers of Lipata National High School. The action plan focused on policy orientation, rights-based accommodation strategies, IEP writing, modified assessment design, assistive technology awareness, resource mapping, differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning, disability-specific immersion, and the establishment of an Inclusive Education Learning Action Cell. The plan aimed to strengthen teachers' policy awareness, improve confidence in handling learners with disabilities, and support more effective inclusive education practices.

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## 4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that teachers of Lipata National High School had a moderate level of awareness of inclusive education policies and generally positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities in regular education settings. Teachers showed strong understanding of the rights and accommodations of learners with disabilities, but gaps remained in their awareness of support services, referral systems, assistive technologies, and school-level implementation procedures.

A statistically significant moderate positive relationship was found between inclusive education policy awareness and teachers' attitudes. This indicates that teachers with higher policy awareness tend to demonstrate more positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities.

It is recommended that the school implement the proposed action plan to strengthen teachers' policy awareness and inclusive education readiness. Regular orientations, training on accommodations and differentiated instruction, assistive technology awareness, collaboration with SPED personnel, and stronger access to support services should be prioritized. Future studies may be conducted in other schools to compare findings and further improve inclusive education practices.

### 3.1 Profile of the Respondents

The study involved 67 teacher-respondents from Lipata National High School, most of whom were female (59%) and between 30 and 50 years old. Abantas (2022) explains that teacher demographics and experience can influence both attitudes and readiness for inclusive education. Most respondents had completed at least some graduate-level coursework, while a smaller number held a master's degree. Macabenta et al. (2023) and Lindner et al. (2023) note that educational background and teaching experience contribute to teachers' ability to implement inclusive practices effectively.

### 3.2 Level of Teachers' Awareness of Inclusive Education Policies

Overall, teachers demonstrated a moderate level of awareness, with a grand mean of 3.42. According to De Arao and Fontanilla (2024) and Donath et al. (2023), awareness of policies, rights, and accommodations is crucial for effective inclusion. Teachers were most aware of learners' rights and accommodations (mean = 3.88), while knowledge of school-level guidelines and support services scored slightly lower (means = 3.35 and 2.95, respectively). Crispel and Kasperski (2021) emphasize that ongoing training and access to resources are needed to improve teacher awareness of policy details and available support systems.

### 3.3 Level of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Learners with Disabilities

Teachers generally held positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities, with a grand mean of 4.08. Savolainen, Malinen, and Schwab (2022) highlight that positive attitudes contribute to a supportive learning environment. Commitment to inclusive classroom practices received the highest rating (mean = 4.40), followed by willingness to accommodate learners (mean = 4.18) and belief in learner capabilities (mean = 4.15). Comfort in interacting with learners scored slightly lower at 3.70, reflecting the need for additional confidence-building and training, consistent with Lindner et al. (2023) and Macabenta et al. (2023).

### 3.4 Significant Relationship Between Policy Awareness and Teachers' Attitudes

Correlation analysis revealed a weak but significant positive relationship between policy awareness and teacher attitudes ( $r = 0.437$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Bandura (1997) and Ajzen (1991) note that self-efficacy and planned behavior influence the translation of knowledge into attitude-driven practices. This finding suggests that teachers with greater awareness of inclusive education policies tend to hold more positive attitudes toward learners with disabilities. However, other factors such as training, resources, school culture, and institutional support may also contribute, as noted by Sharma, May, and Engelbrecht (2021) and Tagyamon, Andan, and Villanueva (2025).

### 3.5 Proposed Action Plan

Based on these findings, the study proposed an action plan to strengthen inclusive education at Lipata National High School. Cabansag, Tadena, and Umali (2023) and Arias, Calago, and Cabanilla (2023) highlight that regular policy orientations, training on accommodations, and differentiated instruction improve teacher readiness. The plan also emphasizes collaboration among general education teachers, SPED personnel, parents, and administrators to ensure the effective implementation of inclusive classroom practices (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021; De Arao & Fontanilla, 2024).

### Compliance with ethical standards

This study complied with applicable academic, institutional, and ethical standards in the conduct of research involving human participants. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and the teacher-respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the data gathered. Informed consent was secured before data collection, and respondents were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All responses were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic and research purposes. The data were presented in aggregate form to protect the identity of the respondents. The researcher observed honesty, proper attribution of sources, respect for participant welfare, and compliance with data privacy principles throughout the conduct of the study. No conflict of interest was declared, and the manuscript remains the intellectual work of the researcher, with all cited materials duly acknowledged in accordance with scholarly and ethical standards.

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