

Perceived Effectiveness of Multicultural Education in Promoting Inclusivity

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Abstract

This study determined the perceived effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity among elementary teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School. Specifically, it assessed the level of teachers' implementation of multicultural education dimensions in terms of content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. It also examined teachers' perceptions of inclusive education relative to system, support, cultural change, partnerships, and monitoring, and analyzed the relationship between these variables. A descriptive research design was employed using a researcher-made questionnaire administered through Google Forms to 57 elementary teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using weighted mean, Pearson's *r*, and Cronbach's Alpha through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that the dimensions of multicultural education were highly implemented across all areas, particularly in empowering school culture and social structure and content integration. Teachers also strongly agreed with all dimensions of inclusive education, including system, support, cultural change, partnerships, and monitoring. Furthermore, significant positive relationships were found between the implementation of multicultural education dimensions and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, indicating that stronger multicultural education practices are associated with more favorable perceptions of inclusivity. The study concluded that multicultural education is an effective approach in fostering inclusive learning environments and promoting respect, acceptance, and collaboration among diverse learners. It recommended strengthening multicultural education practices, providing continuous professional development opportunities for teachers, and encouraging greater collaboration among schools, families, and communities. This study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education by promoting inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners. The findings also support educational and social sustainability by strengthening inclusive school practices, fostering cultural understanding, and encouraging collaborative participation within the school community.

Keywords: Cultural Change, Equity Pedagogy, Inclusive Education, Knowledge Construction, Multicultural Education, Partnerships, Prejudice Reduction

1. Introduction

Multicultural education serves as an important framework for promoting inclusivity, equity, and social justice in diverse educational settings. In the Philippines, where learners come from varied racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, and cognitive backgrounds, multicultural education supports the creation of learning environments that recognize diversity and provide equal opportunities for all students. This study examined the effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity among elementary teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School and explored the relationship between teachers' implementation of multicultural education dimensions and their perceptions of inclusive education. The findings served as the basis for a proposed multicultural education advocacy plan.

1.1 Background of the Study on Multicultural Education and Inclusivity Among Elementary Teachers

The Philippines is a multicultural country where learners come from diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, and cognitive backgrounds. This diversity highlights the importance of multicultural education in promoting social justice, educational equity, and meaningful learning experiences for all students. Schools play a vital role in addressing inequality and fostering social change; thus, teachers must possess the knowledge and competencies necessary to create inclusive and equitable classroom environments. Multicultural education has emerged as an approach that addresses challenges in diverse classrooms by promoting cultural sensitivity, appreciation of diversity, and equal educational opportunities. As a developing field of study, it seeks to provide equitable educational opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic groups while developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to participate effectively in a democratic society.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature on Multicultural Education and Inclusive Education

Multicultural education emphasizes diversity appreciation, cultural sensitivity, equity, and inclusivity within educational settings. It promotes equal opportunities for learners and supports the development of learning environments that recognize and respect differences among students. Key dimensions of multicultural education include content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Inclusive education likewise focuses on creating educational systems that provide support, encourage cultural change, strengthen partnerships, and ensure effective monitoring of inclusive practices. Together, multicultural and inclusive education contribute to positive learning experiences and equitable participation among diverse groups of learners.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Multicultural Education in Promoting Inclusivity

Multiculturalism is evident throughout the Philippines and is associated with challenges such as language barriers, racism, stereotypes, and marginalization. Despite the growing recognition of diversity, discrimination against minority and indigenous populations continues to exist, often resulting in unequal treatment and limited opportunities. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing the goals and values of multicultural education. In the Philippine educational system, Republic Act 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation and professional development in supporting inclusive and equitable educational practices. Prior to the implementation of this law, mechanisms had already been established to review and strengthen teachers' professional competencies in response to educational reforms and changing societal needs.

1.4 Theoretical or Conceptual Basis of Multicultural Education and Inclusive Education

This study was anchored on the dimensions of multicultural education, namely content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. These dimensions served as indicators in assessing teachers' implementation of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity. The study also considered teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in terms of system, support, cultural change, partnerships, and monitoring. These variables provided the conceptual framework for examining the relationship between multicultural education implementation and perceptions of inclusive education among elementary teachers.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Examining Multicultural Education and Inclusivity Among Elementary Teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School

Although multicultural education is recognized as a significant approach for promoting inclusivity, there remains a need to assess how teachers implement its dimensions and how these practices influence their perceptions of inclusive education. This study addressed this need by determining the level of teachers' implementation of multicultural education dimensions, assessing their perceptions of inclusive education, examining the relationship between these variables, and proposing a multicultural education advocacy plan based on the findings.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Quality Education and Inclusion

This study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education for all. By examining the effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity, the study contributes to understanding how educational institutions can create learning environments that value diversity, equity, and inclusion. The findings support educational practices that help learners develop the competencies necessary to participate effectively in diverse communities.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Educational and Social Sustainability

The study contributes to educational and social sustainability by identifying strategies that strengthen inclusive learning environments and equitable educational opportunities. Promoting multicultural education supports social cohesion, reduces inequalities, and prepares learners to become socially responsible and globally aware citizens. The proposed multicultural education advocacy plan may assist educational institutions in sustaining inclusive practices and advancing long-term human capital development through quality and inclusive education.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to determine the perceived effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity among elementary teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School. Descriptive research focuses on describing existing conditions and obtaining information regarding the characteristics and perceptions of respondents through survey methods.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Lemery Pilot Elementary School. The school served as the research setting where data were collected from elementary teachers regarding their implementation of multicultural education and perceptions of inclusive education.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of elementary teachers from Grades 1 to 6 of Lemery Pilot Elementary School. These teachers were selected because of their direct involvement in classroom instruction and their ability to provide relevant insights regarding multicultural education and inclusivity in the educational setting.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized purposive sampling in selecting the participants. The respondents were drawn from the total population of 57 elementary teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School. A total of 57 teachers participated in the study and provided information regarding their perceptions of multicultural education and its role in promoting inclusivity.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. The questionnaire consisted of two major sections that measured the level of implementation of multicultural education and the teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. The instrument was carefully developed by the researchers and underwent construction, validation, and evaluation by professionals prior to administration. A 4-point Likert scale was utilized to determine the respondents' level of implementation of the dimensions of multicultural education and their perceptions of inclusive education, with one representing the lowest rating and four representing the highest rating.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

After the questionnaire was approved, the researchers sought permission from the principal of Lemery Pilot Elementary School to conduct the study and distribute the survey instrument through Google Forms. The questionnaire link was provided to the identified respondents, and their consent to participate was obtained before data collection. Completed responses were gathered and retrieved through Google Forms for subsequent analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Weighted mean was used to determine the perceived effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity and to describe the respondents' assessments of the variables under study. Pearson's r was employed to determine the relationship between the level of implementation of multicultural education and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the Likert-scale instrument. The study ensured the reliability of the questionnaire through the use of a structured instrument and validation procedures. Confidentiality of responses was maintained throughout the study. Collecting data from participants with varying experiences helped minimize information bias and enhanced the credibility of the gathered information.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and permission was obtained prior to data collection. The confidentiality of the respondents' information and responses was strictly maintained. Data were collected solely for research purposes, and all information gathered was treated with appropriate ethical consideration to protect the privacy of the participants.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Teachers' Implementation of the Dimensions of Multicultural Education in Promoting Inclusivity

3.1.1 Content Integration

The findings revealed that teachers highly implemented content integration in promoting inclusivity, with a composite mean of 3.72. The respondents demonstrated strong implementation of integrating diverse cultural perspectives, adapting cross-cultural comparisons, connecting lessons to students' cultural experiences, incorporating cultural and ethnic content, and utilizing multicultural resources and examples in classroom instruction. This finding indicates that teachers actively integrate multicultural content into their lessons to create inclusive learning experiences. Janakiraman (2019) highlighted that content integration allows students to connect with learning materials that reflect their experiences and cultures, encouraging participation and engagement. The result supports contemporary multicultural education approaches that emphasize cultural awareness, inclusivity, and meaningful representation of diverse groups in the curriculum.

3.1.2 Knowledge Construction

Teachers highly implemented knowledge construction, obtaining a composite mean of 3.68. The respondents frequently encouraged students to analyze issues from multiple cultural perspectives, examine biases in educational materials,

critically evaluate societal narratives, and understand how knowledge is influenced by social and cultural contexts. The findings suggest that teachers are committed to helping learners understand how knowledge is created and shaped by diverse perspectives. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2022) and Flores and Garcia (2023) emphasized that culturally inclusive knowledge construction enhances student engagement, achievement, and identity development. The result reflects teachers' efforts to create reflective and culturally responsive learning environments.

3.1.3 Prejudice Reduction

The implementation of prejudice reduction was also rated highly implemented, with a composite mean of 3.64. Teachers reported fostering mutual understanding, promoting respect among students from different backgrounds, reducing discriminatory attitudes, and utilizing inclusive curricula and activities that encourage empathy and critical thinking. These findings indicate that teachers consistently employ strategies aimed at reducing bias and strengthening positive intergroup relationships. Nieto and Bode (2022) emphasized that prejudice reduction strategies are essential components of multicultural education because they help cultivate inclusive and respectful learning environments. The result demonstrates teachers' commitment to promoting equity and cultural understanding in the classroom.

3.1.4 Equity Pedagogy

The findings showed a high level of implementation of equity pedagogy, with a composite mean of 3.66. Teachers reported supporting students from diverse cultural, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic backgrounds through varied instructional approaches, culturally responsive teaching strategies, and learning experiences that address diverse learner needs. The result indicates that teachers recognize diversity as an asset and adapt instructional practices to ensure equitable learning opportunities. This finding supports the studies of Nieto and Bode (2018) and Howard (2022), which emphasized that equity-focused teaching practices are necessary for creating effective and inclusive educational environments.

3.1.5 Empowering School Culture and Social Structure

Teachers highly implemented empowering school culture and social structure, obtaining the highest composite mean of 3.74 among the multicultural education dimensions. The respondents reported promoting shared leadership, collaborative decision-making, culturally responsive teaching, equity, respect, trust, and open communication within the school community. The findings suggest that teachers actively contribute to creating school environments where diversity is valued and inclusion is embedded in school culture. Howard and Navarro (2021) emphasized the importance of shared leadership and inclusive decision-making, while Nieto (2022), UNESCO (2020), and OECD (2023) highlighted the role of systemic and cultural transformation in achieving inclusive education. The results demonstrate strong institutional support for multicultural practices.

3.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education

3.2.1 Inclusive Education Relative to System

Teachers strongly agreed regarding the importance of systemic support for inclusive education, with a composite mean of 3.78. The respondents emphasized the need for educational reforms, strong leadership, diversity-responsive policies, and systems that support equitable learning opportunities for all students. These findings indicate that teachers view inclusive education as a system-wide responsibility requiring institutional commitment and leadership. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2016) argued that inclusive education extends beyond physical placement and requires curriculum, assessment, and pedagogical structures that reflect student diversity.

3.2.2 Inclusive Education Relative to Support

The respondents strongly agreed on the importance of support structures in inclusive education, obtaining a composite mean of 3.68. Teachers recognized professional development, mentorship, collaboration, culturally responsive teaching, and institutional support as essential components of successful inclusive practice. The findings support Florian and Black-Hawkins (2016) and Sharma and Sokal (2016), who emphasized that continuous professional development and teacher support are critical in building inclusive learning environments. The result highlights teachers' recognition of the importance of ongoing assistance in implementing inclusive education effectively.

3.2.3 Inclusive Education Relative to Cultural Change

Teachers strongly agreed on the role of cultural change in inclusive education, with a composite mean of 3.65. The respondents acknowledged the value of culturally responsive teaching, global awareness, adaptive learning, multicultural curricula, and the celebration of diversity within educational settings. These findings suggest that teachers recognize inclusive education as a transformative process that requires shifts in values, beliefs, and institutional practices. Nieto (2017) and Ladson-Billings (2021) emphasized that multicultural education promotes social justice by challenging inequities and transforming educational structures. The result reflects strong support for inclusive and culturally responsive educational reform.

3.2.4 Inclusive Education Relative to Partnerships

The findings revealed a strong level of agreement regarding partnerships, with a composite mean of 3.70. Teachers emphasized collaboration among schools, families, communities, stakeholders, and organizations as important factors in supporting inclusive education. This result aligns with Florian and Black-Hawkins (2017), Mitra (2018), and UNESCO (2021), who highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in creating inclusive learning environments. The findings demonstrate teachers' recognition that effective inclusion requires collective effort and shared responsibility.

3.2.5 Inclusive Education Relative to Monitoring

Teachers strongly agreed on the importance of monitoring in inclusive education, obtaining a composite mean of 3.67. The respondents highlighted continuous assessment, stakeholder involvement, data collection, evaluation processes, and monitoring systems as essential components of inclusive education. The findings support Loreman (2017), Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2020), Florian and Black-Hawkins (2018), and Ainscow and Sandill (2018), who emphasized the role of systematic monitoring in sustaining inclusive education initiatives. The result demonstrates that teachers value accountability and continuous improvement in inclusive educational practices.

3.3 Relationship Between Multicultural Education and Perceptions of Inclusive Education

The findings revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all dimensions of multicultural education and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. Content integration showed significant positive relationships with system, support, cultural change, partnerships, and monitoring, with correlations ranging from moderate to strong positive relationships. Knowledge construction also demonstrated significant positive relationships across all indicators, with moderate to strong positive correlations. The results suggest that teachers who effectively integrate multicultural content and knowledge construction strategies tend to have more favorable perceptions of inclusive education. Akcaoglu and Arsal (2022) found that multicultural education interventions based on content integration significantly improved multicultural attitudes and efficacy among educators. Similarly, Gay (2018), Sleeter (2011), and Epstein (2011) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching, institutional support, and collaborative partnerships strengthen inclusive educational practices. The findings further showed that prejudice reduction had significant positive relationships with all aspects of inclusive education, ranging from strong to very strong positive relationships. Equity pedagogy likewise demonstrated strong to very strong positive relationships with system, support, cultural change, partnerships, and monitoring. Empowering school culture and social structure exhibited the strongest relationships overall, with strong and very strong positive correlations across all indicators. These results indicate that multicultural education and inclusive education are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Teachers who actively implement prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture practices are more likely to perceive inclusive education positively. The findings are supported by Nieto (2017), Gay (2018), Darling-Hammond et al. (2021), Artiles et al. (2017), and Florian and Spratt (2016), who emphasized that inclusive education thrives when schools promote equity, cultural responsiveness, systemic support, and collaborative school cultures. The rejection of all null hypotheses confirms that greater implementation of multicultural education dimensions is significantly associated with more favorable perceptions of inclusive education among teachers.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concluded that elementary teachers demonstrated a high level of implementation of the dimensions of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity, particularly in content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. The respondents also exhibited highly positive perceptions of inclusive education in terms of system, support, cultural change, partnerships, and monitoring. Furthermore, significant positive relationships were found between the implementation of multicultural education dimensions and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, indicating that multicultural education contributes to fostering inclusive learning environments. The proposed multicultural education advocacy plan serves as a guide in promoting respect, acceptance, understanding, and collaboration among teachers, students, and the school community.

Teachers are encouraged to continuously promote respect for diverse cultures, strengthen collaboration among learners, and regularly assess the implementation of multicultural education practices. Schools should provide adequate support and professional development opportunities to enhance teachers' understanding and application of multicultural and inclusive education. Future researchers may further examine specific multicultural education practices that influence students' sense of inclusion and respect. Likewise, teachers, parents, and other members of the school community are encouraged to actively support and advocate the principles of multicultural education to foster a more inclusive and united educational environment.

The study was limited to elementary teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School and focused on determining the perceived effectiveness of multicultural education in promoting inclusivity. Data were gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire and were based solely on the respondents' perceptions regarding the implementation of multicultural education and inclusive education. The findings therefore reflect the views of the selected respondents within the study.

setting and scope.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study received no external funding and was conducted among elementary teachers of Lemery Pilot Elementary School using a researcher-made questionnaire administered through Google Forms. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection, and only non-invasive survey methods were utilized. The confidentiality of all responses was strictly maintained, and no identifying information was disclosed in the reporting of the findings.

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