

The Effectiveness of the Inclusive Education Subject in the Pre-service Education Curriculum viewed from the Student Teachers' Perspective

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Inclusive education is becoming a worldwide trend and because teacher training institutions play a significant role in ensuring the competence of pre-service education students towards catering the needs of increasing range of diverse learners, it is important to prepare them by shifting the pedagogy in line with inclusive education. This study has been carried out to view the perspective of the 142 student teachers in terms of the effectiveness of the Inclusive Education subject, a one-semester course in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary university in the Philippines that offers training on inclusive education practices to the pre-service education students. Guided by the administration of a validated questionnaire, the student teachers gave their own perspective on the effectiveness of offering the subject along the identified strands on the course objectives, course content, course strategies, the instructor and the goodness of the year level of offering. Findings revealed that the student teachers view the subject as generally very effective across the five strands identified. The results of this study are significant in the improvement of the curriculum and possible dissemination of inclusive education subject to other teacher education institutions.

Keywords: pre-service education curriculum, perceptions, teacher education, inclusive education, effectiveness

Introduction

Inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream schools is a worldwide trend. This philosophy has changed dramatically over the past two

decades and several countries have led in the effort to implement policies which foster the integration and, more recently, inclusion of these students into mainstream environments. It has been featured highly in the educational priorities of many countries (Angelides, 2008) such as Philippines, India, USA, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia as evidenced by their establishment of educational policies and legislations to promote inclusive practices (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2008). Although the movement of inclusive education has gained momentum in recent years, a key element in the successful implementation of the policy is the views of the teachers who have the major responsibility for implementing it (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes are critical and important factor in ensuring the success of inclusive practices and policy (Burke & Sutherland, 2004) since teachers' acceptance of the policy of inclusion is likely to affect their commitment to implementing it (Norwich, 1994). Negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusion of students with special needs may impede the success of an inclusion program (Van Reusen, Shoho & Barker, 2001). Inclusion requires commitment from a range of stakeholders including governments, teacher training institutions, schools, teachers, and the school community if it is to be successful. As we move towards an inclusive future, it is teacher training institutions that will become pivotal in ensuring that teachers have the appropriate attitudes and skills to further this program (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman, Earle, 2006).

Inclusive education is related to the effort of overcoming barriers that prevent the participation and learning of all children, regardless of their race, gender, social background, sexuality, disability or attainment in schools (Booth & Ainscow, 1998) and allows these children to socialize with their peers without special needs and actively participate in class activities which help develop their social competence, communication skills, behavior skills, and academic performance (Fisher & Meyer, 2002; Copeland et al., 2004). Inclusive education does not only focus on the barriers that students face but also, as Booth and Dyssegaard (2008) argue, focuses on the development of cultures, policies and practices in educational systems as well as in educational institutions for them to be able to respond to the diversity of their students and to treat them equally. With this, the responsibility of teachers in creating an environment of meaningful learning where inclusion of students is practiced is deemed important.

As early as in the stage of pre-service teacher education, teachers must have mastered the pedagogy of implementing inclusive education in their teaching, in their methodologies, and in their viewpoints. A big part of this

mastery is efficient training of student teachers in the pre-service education level. They have to develop concern for children with disabilities, and change their negative attitudes into positive ones to eliminate their prejudicial aspects towards these children. A huge responsibility rests on colleges and universities offering teacher education to properly train their pre-service education students and their professional education teachers, and to review their curriculum.

Simui (2009) as cited in the report by the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2010) propounds that teacher education should be at the “center” of inclusive education reform hence there is a need to check pre-service teacher education as a beginning stage in the implementation of inclusive education. He further argues that preparing teachers for inclusive education should include strategies aimed at transforming teachers’ practices, which are largely influenced by their attitudes, beliefs, and values. According to Avramidis and Norwich (2002), beginning teachers need not only the skills and knowledge base to be successful in inclusive education environments, but also need to develop positive attitudes and sentiments towards their work in this area to ensure inclusive future in their classrooms. This is also supported by Franzkowiak (2009) who argued that introductory courses on inclusive education should be mandatory for all teacher education students.

The thrust of inclusive education in the country has been espoused not only by the basic education but also by the higher education. This streams from the government laws and policies from the constitution, Republic Acts (RA) 7277 otherwise known as Magna Carta for Disabled Persons and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, and 9442 also known as An act amending the RA 7277) and Department of Education (DepED) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) memoranda pertaining student with disabilities. This paradigm shift is influenced by the Salamanca Declaration in 1994 at the World Congress on special needs education. As one of the participating countries, the country aims to promote the objective of the Education for All by considering the fundamental policy shift required to promote the approach of inclusive education particularly by enabling schools to serve all children including those with special needs (UNESCO, 1994). It is therefore imperative for the institution to start the idea or to embrace the philosophy of inclusion by learning the theories and principles behind inclusive education with teacher education institution in the forefront. Teacher education plays a very significant role in instilling these principles to the would-be teachers because if they have a positive attitude, they are willing to

provide accommodations to students with special needs (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012) and if they radiate positive attitude, it would lead to its successful implementation (Burke & Sutherland, 2004; Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

Offering an inclusive education subject as an introductory course to teacher education students can be a step towards the reform on inclusive education. Through an inclusive education subject, student teachers are trained specifically on dealing with diverse classrooms, accepting differences of students, catering to their needs and finding strategies that improve or refine instruction in the future. Furthermore, it is stressed that the subject can benefit student teachers especially in understanding the principles behind inclusive education, theoretical framework of the policy, and updates on the advent of inclusive education. Since this subject is a vital addition to the inclusive education reform for student teachers, it is believed that the perception of student teachers to this subject is necessary in the improvement of inclusive education reform in the teacher education institutions (TEIs). Therefore, studying the effectiveness of inclusive education subject from the perspective of the student teachers can contribute to the inclusive education in the country.

In the Philippines, Saint Louis University's School of Teacher Education (SLU- STE) in Baguio City deals greatly on inclusive education by integrating a 3-unit subject entitled "Inclusive Education" in the curriculum of the pre-service education. This subject has been offered since 2002 every second semester in the first year level. The subject mainly discusses the principles of inclusive education, values such as accepting and valuing differences, understanding disabilities, and teaching and administrative strategies to integrate inclusion in the classrooms and in the schools.

This study shall attempt to find out whether student teachers, specifically the fourth year practice teachers of the School of Teacher Education (STE) of Saint Louis University in the City of Baguio were persuaded by the Inclusive Education subject by measuring its effectiveness. It seeks to know how effective is the subject in terms of the course objectives, course content, course teaching strategies, effectiveness of the instructor and goodness of year level offering in the development of inclusive orientation to these students? The findings of the study shall help the administrators of teacher education institutions (TEIs) to effectively design a curriculum in line with meeting the trend of inclusive education.

Method

Subjects and setting

A total of 142 student teachers or fourth year teacher education students who are already having their on-the-job-training representing the different courses and major fields from a multidisciplinary university found in Baguio City, a chartered city and melting pot of language and culture in the Northern part of the Philippines, were asked to participate in the study. They were chosen since they have already taken the Inclusive Education course and they are having their practice teaching involving students with diverse needs so they have exposure to and understanding of the application of the concepts of the course in their on-the-job training. The university has the largest student population (average of 30,000 every school term) in the city and the only university in the country that offers the Inclusive Education subject as integrated in the Teacher Education Curriculum in the first year level. The subject mainly discusses the principles of inclusive education, values such as accepting and valuing differences, understanding disabilities, teaching and administrative strategies to integrate inclusion in the classrooms and in the schools. The respondents represented the following courses and field of specialization: Bachelor of Elementary Education major in General Education (20 or 14.08%), Special Education (17 or 11.97%), and Pre-School Education (13 or 9.16%); Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English (27 or 19.01%), Mathematics (13 or 9.16%), Biological Sciences (11 or 7.75%), Physical Sciences (3 or 2.11%), Social Studies (13 or 9.16%), Music, Arts and Physical Education – MAPEH (13 or 9.16%), and Filipino (12 or 8.45%). They also belong to different sex; with 97 or 68.31% (females and 45 or 31.69% (males).

Data measure and data collection procedure

To gather data and the information needed in the study, a two-part researchers' developed instrument was fielded. The first part consisted of the information about the respondents; their course, major and sex for their profiling or characterization. The second part of the instrument called the scale of effectiveness was developed by the researchers based on literature review, syllabus of the subject constructed by the professors and interview with the director of the Institute of Inclusive Education. The 65-item set of phrases and statements gauges the effectiveness of the Inclusive Education subject in terms of the five strands namely: from the syllabus - course objectives, course content, course teaching strategies; and from the review of literature and interview- the effectiveness of the instructor and the goodness of the year level offering. The student teachers were asked to rate the items as to the extent of their agreement according to their perception following the given scale: 4 –

Very Effective, 3 – Effective, 2- Slightly Effective and 1 – Not Effective. The data gathering tool was pilot-tested on a non-participant group for purposes of reliability testing. Results of the Cronbach alpha test yielded a reliability index of 96.84%.

The researchers personally administered the instrument to the student teachers with the permission of the school dean, the head of the Professional Education department, and with the assistance of the faculty member in charge of the class. The respondents were informed that they are free to ask questions and are free to quit answering the questionnaires if they want. The respondents were given ample time to answer the questionnaire so that their views or perception will reflect what they wanted.

Data analysis

Through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 13.0, responses were averaged from obtaining the weighted mean of the answers of the respondents in every item. The mean values were interpreted according to the scale of 1.00 – 1.74 (Not Effective or NE), 1.75 – 2.49 (Slightly Effective or SE), 2.50 – 3.24 (Effective or E), and 3.25 – 4.00 (Very Effective or VE). To validate the internal reliability of each of the identified items, an internal reliability testing using Cronbach Alpha was conducted. All items with a reliability coefficient above .60 were considered acceptable for purposes of this investigation. From the results of the reliability testing, all items in the questionnaire were acceptable resulting to a very high coefficient reliability of 0.9864. After the interpretation of the weighted mean values, the statements were ranked to determine which characteristics of the inclusive education subject are perceived to be effective.

Findings and Discussion

Preparing teachers for regular class teaching has undergone a major pedagogical shift in recent years. Training institutions are now required to ensure that pre-service teachers are competent to cater for the needs of an increasing range of diverse learners. This move has been promoted by international recommendations (now more than 12 years old) from UNESCO to include content on inclusion as part of teacher training programs (UNESCO, 1994). In preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms, their attitudes, beliefs, expectations and acceptance of people with diverse needs may well be challenged (Sharma, Forlin, Loreman, Earle, 2006).

Evaluating the effectiveness of the subject from the students as one of the

stakeholders can give a rich understanding of the underlying responsibility of teacher training institutions to offer quality teacher education programs to produce competent and responsive teachers of the future and to cater for its improvement or possible dissemination of new information or data to other universities with pre-service teacher training.

Course objectives. The course objectives are evaluated to see if these were met by the subject as perceived by the student teachers. It is important to evaluate these because objectives serve as the guide of the instructors in delivering the said subject. Course objectives are based on psychology of education and learning, national competency based-standards and from international standards. Cognitive objectives or knowledge – based objectives are objectives that cater to the ability of the learners to learn the lesson using the cognition facilities or using the brain to learn the subject; affective objectives or value – based objectives are focused on the values and the emotional aspects that the learners will learn in the subject, while psychomotor objectives or skills – based objectives are for the physical attributes and skills that are needed in learning the subject. The National Competency Based Teacher Standards Objectives are objectives taken from the national competency standards of a Filipino teacher considering the different areas that need to be developed in a student to become an effective teacher someday. The 21st century skills – based objectives are objectives based on international standards for a teacher to achieve; these include the skills especially integrating technology in teaching and to be abreast with the global community.

Table 1 presents the effectiveness of the subject in terms of the course objectives as perceived by the student teachers.

Table 1. *Effectiveness of the subject in terms of the course objectives as perceived by the student teachers*

Course Objectives	WM	I	Rank
<i>Cognitive</i>	3.35	VE	5
<i>Affective</i>	3.52	VE	1
<i>Psychomotor</i>	3.41	VE	4
<i>NCBTS – Based Objectives</i>	3.44	VE	2
<i>21st Century Skills-Based Objectives</i>	3.43	VE	3
Over-all weighted mean	3.43	VE	

As seen in the result, the student teachers remark the affective objectives as the most effective among the five general objectives of the course. The affective objectives obtained a mean of 3.52, and have the highest in rank as very effective. This means that the subject primarily gives importance in identifying, understanding, and addressing how people learn and that the student teachers perceive the significance of the subject as more focused on letting them understand the challenges of diversity. The respondents manifested a shift into positive attitude or concern towards inclusion of all types of children in school. This implies that the student teachers have manifested positive behavior and attitude towards children with special learning needs and other learners who are marginalized. They have also recognized and appreciated human diversity and examine one's own belief and attitude related to individuals with disabilities or impairments. This result represents the basic nature of the subject, which is responding to diversity and embracing inclusion that taught the student teachers the value of accepting diversity and have positive attitudes toward inclusion.

The National Competency Based Teacher Standards-Based objectives ranked second in the 'very effective' of the result. It has obtained a mean of 3.44 which implies that student teachers have realized the importance of the NCBTS, being the Philippines' teachers' guide that contains the standards of competent teachers. This is parallel with the affective domain because this objective defines the teaching competence of the student teacher and how will he/ she deal with the affection and recognition of learners' diversity and differences. This also implies that the subject has not only instilled appreciation and affection to diversity but also taught the student teachers on devising learning activities, teaching methods, instructional materials, or resources appropriate to the learners aligned with the objectives of the lesson. Furthermore, as obtained from the specific objectives of the NCBTS for this subject based on the syllabus, student teachers were able to attain demonstrating recognition of learners' background, knowledge and experiences; demonstrating concern for the holistic development of learners by planning varied activities for learners; and communicating clear learning goals for the lessons that are appropriate for learners. The subject has instilled concern on holistic development of diverse learners by planning varied activities that will cater to their needs.

Probing more the result of this strand, it came out that the cognitive objectives made it to the last rank with a mean of 3.35, very effective. This shows that the nature of the subject defines itself more in the affective orientation and accepting diversity over the theoretical and conceptual

understanding of what inclusive education is. The result affirms the fact that the student teachers have preference on manifesting positive behavior than possessing basic knowledge and understanding with theories and concepts. Indeed, the objective of making use of all the theories, concepts, and ideas learned in managing an inclusive classroom such as planning for teaching and learning would be ideal for student teachers to realize. The result indeed confirms with Molina (2006) that the evidence to demonstrate that theoretical classes and reading are not sufficient to modify teachers' and students' negative attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs.

Clearly, the psychomotor and 21st century skills- based objectives were also very effective as perceived by the student teachers. Obtaining a weighted mean of 3.43, the psychomotor objectives identified in the course syllabus are designing and creating appropriate curriculum in a regular classroom setting; and learning how to create an inclusive classroom, how to be creative in dealing with children with diverse needs, backgrounds, and characteristics, which were evaluated very effective because through these classroom activities, student teachers were able to achieve inclusive education ideas. Complementary to this are the 21st century skills- based objectives which obtained 3.41 weighted mean and very effective as evaluated by the student teachers. These objectives were based on the globally adapted list of standards for 21st century education. These are: creativity and innovation in developing inclusive education ideas; being open to new and diverse perspectives; using various types of reasoning; analyzing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs; articulating thoughts in a variety of forms; demonstrating ability to work effectively and respectfully in diverse teams; assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work; respecting and leveraging social cultural differences to create new ideas and increase both innovation and quality of work. Psychomotor and 21st century objectives are both skills- based which are generally rated very effective in terms of training the student teachers to become inclusive educators.

In summary, the course objectives were met and were evaluated by student teachers as very effective. The inclusive education subject has met the five objectives effectively with a preconception on the affective objectives since the nature of the subject is more on accepting and responding to diversity. Thus, the acquisition of knowledge and theories about inclusive education will serve only secondary. There is a clear disparity between molding an inclusive teacher and a teacher who knows inclusive education.

Course content. Course content consists of topics that concern the completion of inclusive education. Evaluating the content of the subject is an integral part because it gives an idea how the content answered the objectives of the subjects. The course content is one of the factors that will tell if the subject molds and produces inclusive teachers in the future. As revealed in the table, the topics on understanding the diverse educational needs of students with disabilities and facilitating acceptance and individual differences and friendships are found out to have the highest in ranking. These are supported by the mean value of 3.52 which both achieved a rank of 1.5, which means very effective. In addition, the topic on promoting communication and collaboration to inclusive settings is also a very effective course content in Inclusive Education with 3.51 as its mean, and a corresponding rank of 3. The top three topics on inclusive education are perceived by the student teachers as very effective and subsequently mean functional to their pre- service career.

Table 2. *Effectiveness of the subject in terms of course content as perceived by the student teachers*

Course Content	WM	I	Rank
1. <i>Introduction on content, objectives and rationale, structure, and major terms used in Inclusive Education.</i>	3.38	VE	13
2. <i>Benefits, elements, and principles of inclusion on education.</i>	3.39	VE	11.5
3. <i>Moving Policy Forward through developing inclusive education systems, challengers to policy makers, RA 7277, and ten reasons for inclusion.</i>	3.35	VE	14.5
4. <i>Barriers to learning.</i>	3.27	VE	18
5. <i>Responding to diversity through the nine golden rules of inclusion.</i>	3.33	VE	16
6. <i>Assessment in an inclusive classroom, purposes, individuals involved, and the components of a comprehensive assessment.</i>	3.41	VE	9.5
7. <i>Understanding the diverse educational needs of students with disabilities.</i>	3.52	VE	1.5
8. <i>13 categories of children with special needs (IDEA)</i>	3.39	VE	11.5
9. <i>Factors to consider in determining and understanding the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.</i>	3.41	VE	9.5
10. <i>Promoting communication and collaboration.</i>	3.51	VE	3

11. Facilitating acceptance and individual differences and friendships.	3.52	VE	1.5
12. Helping students make transitions to inclusive settings.	3.50	VE	4
13. Adapting large and small group instruction.	3.49	VE	5
14. Modifying instruction for diverse learners.	3.45	VE	7
15. Modifying reading, writing, spelling and handwriting.	3.35	VE	14.5
16. Modifying math, science, and social studies instruction.	3.30	VE	17
17. Modifying classroom behavior and classroom environment.	3.42	VE	8
18. Evaluating progress of students.	3.47	VE	6
Factor Mean	3.41	VE	

Understanding the diverse educational needs of students with disabilities and facilitating acceptance and individual differences and friendships got the highest rank among the other topics in Inclusive Education. This shows that student teachers are considering first what their students' characteristics are. Through knowing their students, teachers would eventually understand each attitude and behavior of their students. Teachers also would be able to use proper or different strategies and techniques to cater to the needs of each student. It would also lead to the acceptance of individual differences. The gap between the teacher-student and student-student would be changed to friendship if they will understand students' uniqueness. Combining these two factors which are the understanding and accepting of student, would promote communication and collaboration which consequently ranked third of the course content. The teaching-learning process would be successful because of exchanging of idea between teacher-student and student-student and vice versa.

An example of the importance of collaboration is about the collaborative problem-solving. According to research on collaboration specifically on collaborative problem-solving, students are asked to solve problem-solving whenever a physical, social or instructional exclusion of a student occurs. To create a climate of shared responsibility, students are encouraged to initiate the process themselves. During the session, the teacher leads the students through the steps of a structural process; identifying the issue, discussing all possible solutions, screen solutions, choosing and evaluating solution. Collaborative problem-solving (CPS) is judged to be an effective program to promote inclusion, and easy to implement according to the teaching staff (Salisbury, Evans & Palombaro, 1997).

Results also show that barriers to learning as a course content is very effective with a mean of 3.27 which is the lowest rank among the course content. Also, modifying Math, Science, and Social studies instruction of inclusion is very effective with a mean of 3.30 and a rank of 17. Finally, responding to diversity through the nine golden rules of inclusion is also one of the course contents that is very effective but still in the lower rank. It obtained 3.30 as its mean and has a rank of 16. These are three topics perceived by the student teachers as least in ranking.

Barriers to learning got the lowest rank in the course content of Inclusive Education. This means that there are still difficulties for the student teachers to remove the barriers amidst the challenge of inclusive education. The topic identified four barriers of learning, namely: systematic, societal, pedagogical and medical barriers. These barriers have not been well responded by the subject and that the student teachers did not clearly understand how will these barriers be surpassed and be applied in their teaching. Lack of examples of real scenarios is one of the reasons why this topic was not really perceived as effective relative to the other topics in inclusive education. This is due to the fact that the said topic was discussed in theory, not in practice.

Furthermore, the topic on modifying Math, Science, and Social Studies instruction is also where the student teachers had a hard time in understanding. Student teachers perceived this course content as difficult because of the fact that not all students are interested and are specializing in Math, Science and Social Studies. Other specializations such as Filipino, English, and MAPEH also pose diverse challenges to teachers in instruction and so must be dealt to be modified too. The modification of the instruction in Math, Science, and Social Studies is a topic that is not perceived as fit for all student teachers because of the differences in their specializations.

Auxiliary to the least perceived topics is the topic on responding to diversity through the nine golden rules of inclusion. In the rules of inclusion, it includes how to maintain the integrity of the activity, keeping the goals of the activity/ program when making modifications, challenging all participants and encouraging participants to value differences. Student teachers have that mindset that this course content could be effective in the subject but it is difficult to implement or apply. They would think of an activity that could challenge each individual to participate or collaborate with each other. Activity that would promote valuing differences the students have. To be able to do this, teachers themselves must show to their students that they are accepted and they belong to the learning.

In general, the course content on inclusive education subject is very effective. The students see that the subject's topics are indeed essential and functional to the training of education students towards inclusion and also beneficial to their career. This implies that the course content contained topics that define inclusive education in schools and conveyed the salient concepts that an inclusive educator shall possess in the classroom. Specifically, the topic on acceptance of individual differences and understanding diversity were the top two topics that are effective in instilling inclusive orientation and molding inclusive teachers in the future.

Course teaching strategies. The course teaching strategies are also included in the evaluation to see if they are really effective in treating and delivering the course content. There must be parallelism and consistency with the two strands. Table 3 presents the perception of student teachers regarding the effectiveness of the course teaching strategies.

Table 3. *Effectiveness of the subject in terms of course teaching strategies as perceived by the student teachers*

Course Teaching Strategies	WM	I	Rank
1. Lectures	3.34	VE	9.5
2. Sharing of educational practices	3.51	VE	1
3. Group dynamics	3.49	VE	2
4. Research	3.37	VE	7
5. Lecture with group discussions	3.47	VE	3
6. Film viewing	3.35	VE	8
7. Group report	3.34	VE	9.5
8. Online treasure hunt	3.11	E	12
9. Group presentation of differences in culture and language	3.45	VE	4
10. Simulations	3.43	VE	5
11. Invitation of guest speaker	3.28	VE	11
12. Lecture, discussion with presentation of plans and group demonstration	3.39	VE	6
Overall Mean	3.38	VE	

The student teacher respondents perceived that sharing of educational practices is the most effective teaching strategy in teaching the subject and the first in rank which is indicated as very effective. Sharing of educational practices involves every learner in the learning process which students become engaged/ involved in the interaction of one another. Sharing is one of the strategies that place a learner in an educational setting that can be beneficial for increasing their social opportunities because they will share what they know

and can learn from what had been shared by their co-learners leading in a two way learning process where they can gain information from each other. The student teachers believe that they learned a lot from sharing because of the nature or the basic framework of the subject, which is to accept differences and respond to diversity. Sharing elicits interactive and collaborative learning from the students and from the instructor. Through mutual sharing, the student teachers' knowledge and experience are indirectly enhanced from the academic interaction.

Group dynamics is seen also to be a very effective teaching strategy that ranked second. This pedagogical strategy promotes participation and interaction and fosters a deeper and more active learning process. Working together in groups also gives students the opportunity to learn from and teach each other. Classroom research has shown that students often learn better from each other than they do from the teacher (Barkey et al., 2005). Students in a group are responsible not only for learning material being taught in the class, but also for helping their group mates learn. According to the student teachers, they tend to learn more through group dynamics because it allows student centered learning and gives autonomy and increased responsibility to the students. Group dynamics then is very important in inclusive education because it represents diversity and inclusion in a classroom setting.

Student teachers also perceived lecture and group discussions as very effective because lecture is one tool in teachers' arsenal of teaching methods; it is a key component to higher education. Lecture with group discussions is a strategy in which instructors can effectively employ lecturing and promotes student learning where students use discussion to make connections between ideas and experiences and to reflect on a variety of meanings and interpretations of texts, experiences and phenomena. Lectures may be teacher centered yet the integration of group discussions will make the learning involving of students as active participants in the teaching-learning process. This strategy is parallel to the preceding results that group dynamics, discussions, and sharing of practices share common characteristics that are the involvement of education students in the inclusive education teaching. Student teachers perceive balanced learning interaction between the instructor and the students as very effective because of the capacity and power that each of which can offer.

The sharing of educational practices, group dynamics and lecture and group discussions are the most effective teaching strategies in inclusive education that promote active learning in an educational setting. Active

learning allows students to talk and listen, read, write and reflect as they approach course content through problem-solving exercises and other activities all of which require students to apply what they are learning (Johnson, 1999). It helps student teachers become active, responsible and caring learners. They learn to interact successfully with each other and to transfer those skills to effective interactions in the society. Borich (1992) conveys that active learning promotes students' attention, increase on-task behaviour, and decrease incidence of negative behaviour. Moreover, Freiberg and Driscoll (1992) relate that students who are actively involved and engaged in lesson learn better and faster than students who are instructionally inactive. This finding only indicates that learner can learn more and prefers an educational setting that promotes an active learning process.

The student teachers professed that lectures and group reports as teaching strategies are less effective relative to the top ranking strategies. They believe that these two are too traditional for inclusive education. Lectures and group reports monopolize the discussion in a subject that is supposed to be interactive and democratic of sharing and group dynamics. Inclusive education subject does not rely on pure lectures and reporting but also authentic practices that will elicit positive perception on inclusion. For the students, the subject should be a training ground for them to learn the facets of inclusive education applying its principles in the strategies employed by the teachers in teaching the subject.

Student teachers also perceived invitation of guest speaker as a less effective teaching strategy. Invitation of guest speaker is used to enhance the material a teacher is covering (George Mason University, 2010). This strategy can only be used on subject that is only tangentially related to the course. Furthermore, this is not really possible considering the availability of resource speakers in the country since inclusive education is just a recent development in the Philippines.

Lastly, online treasure hunt achieved the last in ranking of teaching strategies in inclusive education subject with the interpretation of 'effective' only. Online treasure hunts serve as a great way to hone student web searching ability and problem-solving. It involves providing students with a goal and then having them search the internet to fulfill the goal. Online treasure hunts are easy to create and the resulting interactive searches are both fun and informative for students. This strategy has quickly become one of the most popular tools for teaching students how to access the use of the resources and information available on the internet. Although online treasure hunt is the most

popular tool for teaching students, student teachers still perceive it as inappropriate for the subject because the subject itself does not need online interaction but personal, face-to-face communication. Furthermore, this kind of strategy is only popular to few teachers. Other students do not prefer using online treasure hunt in a learning process because some do not know how to manipulate it and how it works. Basically, online treasure hunt may not yield very rich learning for inclusive education subject because the subject requires personal interaction and sharing of experiences more than integrating technology as only secondary. Inclusive education subject is not grounded on educational technology but on molding teachers to become accepting and responsive to diversity.

In summary, student teachers perceive that the strategies employed by the teachers in teaching the Inclusive Education subject are very effective. This affirms that the successful implementation of the subject in teacher training depends also largely on the teaching strategies to which the students are exposed with. The quality and the efficacy of the strategy to touch the lives of the pre-service teachers in developing positive attitudes toward inclusion are considered. It can be deduced that those teaching strategies that elicit interaction and collaboration between instructor and students, and students with co-students were perceived to be the most effective strategies. Sharing, group dynamics, lecture and group discussion were all positively perceived by the student teachers as consistent and appropriate in the subject inclusive education. However, pure lecture, group reporting, invitation of guest speaker, and online treasure hunt were gleaned as less effective because these strategies initiates monopoly of knowledge without the active participation of the majority of students.

This is supported by Fox and Ysseldyke (1997), who said that the effectiveness of inclusive education depends largely on instructional variables; specifically teachers must show instructional flexibility and competence. Inclusive education entangles fundamental instructional strategies which will cater to the needs of every student and essential considerations that allow teacher to maximize learning outcomes for all students. Inclusive education teachers have the primary responsibility of providing instruction in classrooms that are characterized by extreme student diversity and in an inclusive setting. Inclusive instruction systematically varies the learning process, product, and content to match the unique learning profiles of individual students. Within an inclusive classroom, differentiated instruction may involve offering several options for what to learn, how to learn, and how to demonstrate learning (Johnson, 1999).

Effectiveness of the instructor. The instructor of this subject has a huge responsibility inside and outside the pre-service education training because they will serve as models of inclusive practice and possess the transformative learning experiences necessary to challenge the assumptions underlying teacher education programs. Table 4 presents the perception of the student teachers on the effectiveness of the instructor.

Table 4. *Effectiveness of the subject in terms of the effectiveness of the instructor as perceived by the student teachers*

Indicators	WM	I	Rank
1. <i>The instructors of this subject practiced the social regard for learning.</i>	3.54	VE	1
2. <i>The instructors of Educ101 are professionally equipped with the skills and mastery in this subject.</i>	3.44	VE	4.5
3. <i>The instructors of this subject are armored with the fundamental values of a professional teacher..</i>	3.46	VE	3
4. <i>The instructors of this course have good classroom management skills and demonstrate gentleness in handling students from different backgrounds.</i>	3.44	VE	4.5
5. <i>The instructor has a good grasp of his subject matter and knows how to deliver it very well.</i>	3.50	VE	2
Overall Mean	3.48	VE	

The results show that student teachers perceive their instructors as role models who are practicing social regard for learning to all students. This is indicated by the weighted mean of 3.54 and is interpreted as very effective. The social regard for learning, being the first domain in the National Competency Based Teacher Standards means that the instructors of inclusive education must be models of proper attitude in dealing with inclusion. The respondents appreciate and model the value of learning through the interactions of the instructors with them. The actions and statements of the instructors reflect an inclusive educator. This implies that the students see and appreciate the values of pursuing learning and exerting effort because their instructors demonstrate modeling and encourage positive and powerful learning. Many researchers highlight the importance of modeling reflective practice to support pre-service teacher learning (Brownell et al., 2005; Hudson-Ross & Graham, 2000) and Sharma (2010) stresses that reflective practice, among other approaches 'requires academics to practice what they preach' (p. 109).

While there is little literature on this subject, Korthagen et al. (2005) found four forms of modeling like implicit modeling, which seems to have a low impact; explicit modeling; explicit modeling and facilitating the translation into the student teachers' own practice; and connecting exemplary behaviour to theory. Their findings confirm that some teacher educators apparently lack the knowledge and skills needed to use modeling in a productive way, to make their own teaching explicit, and to rethink the connection between their teacher education practices and public theory. They also found that experience as a teacher educator does not necessarily lead to more or better modeling and suggest that teacher educators work together and question each other during lessons and analyze each other's practice to deepen their knowledge. Pugach and Johnson (2002) said that teacher educators ought to develop experiences for pre-service teachers that provide them with ways to understand school collaboration as more than simply achieving good communication.

The statement about instructors being armored with the fundamental professional values of character in the four corners of the classroom was perceived to be very effective. The respondents see their instructors as having a good grasp of the subject matter and know how to deliver it very well also is rated as very effective. Student teachers also notice the instructors of the subject as having good classroom management skills and demonstrate gentleness in educating students from different backgrounds. Furthermore, they also perceive their instructors' very effective as professionally equipped with the skills and mastery and are excellent in delivering their content through varied pedagogy and appropriate strategies. The results denote that the student teachers perceive their instructors as possessing the affective character of a teacher in teaching the subject and the necessary mastery and theoretical knowledge about the said subject. They exemplify preparedness and transformative instruction such that students value their contribution to the inclusive education. Instructors possess positive attitudes and that the students would also result to positive attitudes towards inclusion.

The importance of having positive attitudes toward inclusive education amongst in-service educators has been long recognized. If educators hold positive attitudes towards inclusive education it may allow and encourage practices that will guarantee, to a large extent, successful inclusion of all students (Hobbs & Westling, 1998). Highlighting the need for positive attitudes, Murphy (1996) stated that if teachers leave from university with negative attitudes then those attitudes are difficult to change. Positive attitudes can be and need to be fostered through both training and positive experiences with students with disabilities (Hobbs & Westling, 1998). Specific studies

investigating the concerns of educators and in particular student teachers' concerns about inclusive education and their degree of comfort with persons with disabilities, though, are limited. Yet pre-service training may be the best time to address educators' concerns and possibly modify their negative attitudes about inclusive education as well as toward persons with disabilities.

In relation to varied pedagogy of the instructors, Bondy et al. (2007) stressed that teacher educators must employ diverse approaches to learning for their students. As teacher education students ultimately will become teachers of diverse learners, teacher educators must be explicit about this aspect of teaching and learning.

The above findings show that the effectiveness of the instructors can be distinguished in their capability to become role models first before they are able to teach the subject with conviction. Importance of theoretical background comes secondary because of nature of the subject as sensitive to the diversity and needs of the students. Instructors of this subject are expected to teach how to be inclusive and adapt to the approach of inclusive education so above anything else they are expected to be armored with inclusive values and humanness as explained earlier in the results. They are also supposed to be creating a classroom atmosphere where there is respect, fairness, and equity, so as for the aspiring teachers to be imitating him/ her.

Generally, the student teacher respondents have rated their instructors as very effective in treating and dealing with the subject and to them as well. This means that the instructors of inclusive education are highly equipped with the necessary values and mastery of content expected of them as the subject instructor. This also correspondingly signifies that the instructors are generally capable in facilitating learning and implementing the approach of inclusive education to the students.

However, the result of this study is negated by Cochran-Smith (2004) who says that many teacher educators have not had the transformative learning experiences necessary to challenge the assumptions underlying teacher education programmes. Merryfield (2000) explained that one of the reasons why teachers are under-prepared for diversity is the lack of knowledge, experience, commitment and understanding of faculty members who teach teachers.

Goodness of the year level offering. The goodness of the year level offering of the subject is also an important factor to be considered. It must be noted that the year level offering of a certain subject is one factor for the

successful implementation and training for the students. Having the nature of the subject in mind, the maturity and preparedness of the student teachers must be taken into consideration.

Respondents have perceived that the subject has encouraged them to pursue the course as it ranked first with a mean of 3.34, very effective. Such result implies that the subject has instilled to the aspiring teachers the essence of teaching profession. This can be explained on the account that the subject is enticing in helping them see themselves as professional teachers in the future. Furthermore, they also perceive the offering of the subject as very effective in serving as a fundamental foundation of teacher education training for aspiring teachers, as it ranked second. This can be consistent with the result of the top-ranking statement that present the importance of primacy of inclusive education subject over foundations of teaching subjects because it encompasses the basics of accepting the profession in its nature and challenges.

Table 5. *Effectiveness of the subject according to goodness of year level offering as perceived by the student teachers*

<i>Goodness of Year Level Offering</i>	<i>WM</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>1. The subject's year level offering is appropriate in my preparedness and maturity as an individual.</i>	3.28	VE	4
<i>2. The subject's year level offering served as a foundation of teacher education training for aspiring teachers.</i>	3.33	VE	2
<i>3. The subject's year level offering contributed to the development of my concept of inclusion.</i>	3.30	VE	3
<i>4. The year level offering of the subject helped me realize the importance of education and teaching.</i>	3.34	VE	1
<i>5. The year level offering of the subject helped me develop early love for the profession.</i>	3.14	E	5
<i>Overall Weighted Mean</i>	<i>3.28</i>	<i>VE</i>	

Inclusive education subject being offered in the first year level is essential to the pre-service teachers because of the role of the subject in bridging their differences with each other. The subject has helped them become prepared and responsive in catering the needs of their society. It is necessary for these pre-service teachers to develop and learn inclusive practices in preparation for the future professional undertaking.

The results confirmed Angelides' (2008) study that the student teachers seem to have developed some inclusive practices. The classes they took at university seem to have steered them in this direction. In some instances they seemed to undertake leading roles among the teachers of the schools regarding the promotion of inclusive education. The way in which teachers are trained in their initial education seems to have a serious role to play in the development of inclusive practices in the schools they will work at in future. In addition, Haug (2003) argues that if student teachers develop inclusive practices at university, these will then be transferred later to their practice as teachers.

Second to the last in rank is on the perception that the subject has affected their viewpoint in teaching, immediately after high school because of the offering in the first year level as very effective. These respondents have inconsistently perceived the offering of the subject in the first year level as just 'effective' with a weighted mean of 3.14 and correspondingly the last in rank. These least two statements mean that the goodness of offering in the first year level is not really that contributory to the development of a positive viewpoint in teaching rather it just serves as a transition to an endeavor of deeper professional education training in the higher years.

The subject's goodness of offering the subject in the first year level has been relatively rated not suitable considering the weight and importance of the subject. However, it still depends on how the students perceive it between positive and negative according to how they really intend to pursue teaching profession, and according to how they define such purpose. The result supports this claim such that the subject has been seen in two different ways. One is that the subject has helped them realize the essence of pursuing the profession, yet it doesn't necessarily mean developing early love for the profession since it is premature to say that one has developed attachment in a profession in the freshman stage. Moreover, the subject's offering to the first year level can also be friendly to pre-service education student because of the fact that the subject builds the necessary foundation for moving up to higher courses of professional education.

The results of the table shows that the goodness of the year level offering has been seen and perceived by the student teachers respondents as very effective, in general, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 3.28. This means that the subject's offering in the first year level is rated appropriate in changing viewpoints of student teachers toward developing positive attitudes on inclusion. It is very effective in establishing primary foundation for aspiring professional teachers to pursue teaching and not to be confused with environmental dictation and peer pressure.

Summary graph for the effectiveness of the subject. To further analyze the effectiveness of inclusive education subject as perceived by the student teachers, this graph shows which of the five strands is the most gleaned effective and which is the least perceived effective relative to the scale.

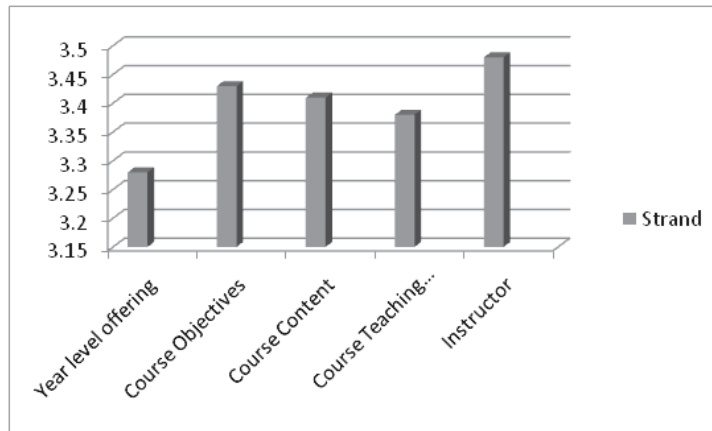


Figure 1. *Effectiveness of the inclusive education subject in terms of the strands identified*

The bar graph presents the summary of effectiveness of inclusive education subject in terms of the five strands identified from the beginning, namely: goodness of year level offering, course objectives, course content, course teaching strategies, and the effectiveness of the instructor. These five strands were gleaned ‘very effective’ as interpreted in the over-all mean value of each strand. Among the five strands, the instructor is the most effective (3.48) followed by the course objectives (3.43), course content (3.41), the course strategies (3.38) and lastly the goodness of year level offering (3.28).

The effectiveness of the instructor in teaching inclusive education subject to students implies that the teaching of the inclusive education subject are done by highly qualified instructors on grounds of their knowledge and experience in terms of the subject matter. This also implies that among the five strands, the instructors’ effectiveness produced positive perception, more satisfaction and more favorable impression among the respondents of the study. This can be explained by the fact that these instructors are the first professional education instructors to handle aspiring teachers and that the imitation and modeling became successful.

The course objectives being the second most very effective strand among the five imply that the student teachers have met and instilled the objectives of the course in their lives and applied it in their practice teaching. The cognitive,

affective, psychomotor, NCBTS- based, and 21st century skills-based objectives all have the rationale towards the acquisition and learning of inclusive pedagogy in their teaching. Inclusive pedagogy focuses on extending what is ordinarily available as part of the routine of classroom life as a way of responding to differences between learners rather than specifically individualizing for some. It represents a shift in thinking about teaching and learning from that which works for most learners along with something 'different or additional' for those who experience difficulties, to an approach to teaching and learning that involves the creation of a rich learning environment characterized by lessons and learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available to everyone so that all are able to participate in classroom life (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Therefore, the course objectives have become very effective in meeting such pedagogy.

The third most effective strand as gleaned by the respondents is the course content and closely tied with the course teaching strategy. These two were perceived positively by the respondents as to their functionality to their theoretical basis of inclusion. The course content will only be delivered through appropriate course teaching strategy. As a result of this study, the respondents gave primacy to the effectiveness of the instructor and course objectives over the course content and the teaching strategies. This finding could imply that the student teachers gave more remarkable feeling or attachment to their instructor as to how he/she dealt or treated the subject matter with conviction. Furthermore, it could also imply that the course content and strategies were just secondary to the respondents. The teacher educators were used as models of imitation in teaching how to teach. This could be supported by the claim of Korthagen, Loughran, and Lunenberg (2005) that teacher educators not only have the role of supporting student teachers' learning about teaching, but they also model the role of the teacher. They also say that teacher education profession is unique: 'During their teaching, doctors do not serve as role models for the actual practice of the profession i.e. they do not treat their students. Teacher educators, conversely, whether intentionally or not, teach their students as well as teach about teaching' (p. 588).

Lastly, the respondents have least perceived the effectiveness of the year level offering as found out in the obtained weighted mean of 3.28, relatively lower as compared with its antecedent strands. This means that the respondents generally do not see the year level offering of the subject as neither appropriate nor unfit for the first year level. It was found out that these student teachers reveal that the year level offering does not produce favourable impression

among them unlike the top four strands above. This could also imply that the student teachers find it relatively ineffective for them to be taking a subject that concerns inclusion and very sensitive to practice teaching.

Conclusion

The student teachers' perspective on the effectiveness of the Inclusive Education subject offered in the pre-service education curriculum on the different strands on course objectives, course content, course teaching strategies, effectiveness of instructor and goodness of year level offering produce a positive and favorable stance. The subject generally produced a favorable impression to the respondents and indeed very effective in instilling inclusive orientation to the students who will be teacher in the future. Knowledge of the perspective of the student teachers being the clientele of the subject could be beneficial to the curriculum planners of the teacher education institution to take into consideration the formulation and development of institutionalizing in the teacher education curriculum the subject on inclusive education for all the would be teachers to be equipped with the content, strategies and values of promoting and embracing inclusive education.

The present research shows that the instructor being the facilitator of the subject is a very important factor in delivering, modeling and leading the students to understand the other strands on the objectives, content and strategies for its effective implementation in the curriculum. For the students, if the facilitator has clearly delivered the goods to them in a very effective manner, then the other factors will follow. It is evident that because the teachers has the highest in mean as gleaned from the results, then they would easily understand and imbibe the other strands of the subject. It is very important to consider the positive attitude and training of teachers who will facilitate the Inclusive Education subject so that the success of including the subject in the curriculum will be expected.

It is also evident in the research that students seem to give an almost equal rating to the effectiveness of the objectives, strategies and content. They recognize that these strands are the important factors in the syllabus to carry out the very objective of the subject on understanding and promoting inclusive education thus a very crucial factor in the development of the syllabus for the subject. These suggest that these strands should be carefully considered in the curriculum planning to ensure and develop a more holistic and integrated inclusive education framework with improved syllabus on teacher preparation in order to adapt to the test of this dynamic world.

The positive results of the perception on the effectiveness of the subject pose the importance of including the inclusive education subject to the curriculum of the higher education institution specially the teacher education institution playing a great role in instilling to the would be teachers the philosophy and pedagogy on inclusion that will eventually lead to the promotion of inclusion or inclusive education in the country and in the world as a whole.

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