



Consciousness on Special Education: The Case of Secondary General Education Teachers in the Philippines

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Abstract: *The descriptive-survey research determines the consciousness of special education of the twenty-five purposively selected secondary general education teachers in the Philippines that caters to learners with special needs in the mainstreamed learning environment through a validated instrument. Descriptive statistical mean, t-test, frequency, percentage, and One-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data and interpreted based on the given scale. Results revealed that the secondary general education teachers' level of consciousness is Average. In addition, age has significantly contributed to the secondary general education teacher's level of consciousness. The young's ages 20 to 30 have a High Level than those who are older ages 41 years old and above. Whilst, it is contrary to the sex as it was found that it has no significant difference where females are more aware than males. Moreover, participants' length of service showed a significant difference. Those new in service (0-5 years) were more aware than those who are already in service for a longer period (11 years & above). It showed further that the majority of the participants were familiar with some of the special needs like hearing impaired, visually impaired, and physical special needs, but they were unaware of autism, learning disability, intellectual disability, and traumatic brain injury. Based on the findings, intensive development on the consciousness of secondary general education teachers on special education should be given priority so that learners with special needs can access quality and meaningful education side by side with able learners.*

Introduction

In the new era of the educational system, the number of learners with special needs is increasing. It is where the role of general education teachers is vital to ensure that learners with special needs have equal access to quality education through the delivery of meaningful learning in an inclusive learning environment (Dela Fuente, 2021). However, there is a great challenge for teachers and policymakers to address the given phenomenon. Recognizing the challenges, the Department of Education (DepEd) has enacted laws to guarantee the right of learners with special needs. This was inscribed in DepEd Order (DO) 72 series of 2009 which embraces the philosophy of accepting all learners regardless of race, size, shape, color, ability, or disability with support from the school's stakeholders (DO 72, 2009). There are certain laws concerning learners with special needs education, however, training for general education teachers handling learners with special needs have been neglected although they are the primary agent in educating all types of learners, especially in mainstream school. Oftentimes, teachers face conflicting demands without even



giving guidance and support on how to confront these challenges (Lea, 2015). Despite the lack of training, teachers are lawfully responsible to abide the law by regarding inclusive education and have to admit learners with special needs in an inclusive learning environment regardless of their readiness to teach these groups of learners (Serapiglia, 2016).

In public schools where classrooms are populated and teachers are not trained, it is a great challenge for each regular teacher to cope with the needs of every learner, especially those with special needs. The push for greater inclusion of learners with special needs in the general education classroom put on the shoulders of teachers the heavy responsibility. The given perspective is true in one of the secondary schools in the Philippines where learners with special needs are mainstreamed in a regular classroom with a population of 50 to 60 learners. Most general education teachers are facing challenges on how to deal with learners with special needs. They feel confused about if they are doing the right approach. This is attributed to the fact that general education teachers don't have enough knowledge of inclusive/special education. They feel unprepared which leads to low confidence in their ability to meet the demands of the individual needs of learners with special needs for they lack the training (Serapiglia, 2016). It posited that general education teachers have difficulty managing and coping in teaching learners with special needs as they have not acquired the necessary skills which are significant in the delivery of quality and meaningful learning for learners with special needs.

Literature Review

Consciousness of General Education Teachers

Teachers are considered to be the guiding light in the classroom. Emphasis must be geared toward their consciousness of special education to ensure that every student learns and develop their full potential. Teachers need support from stakeholders for them to be trained in teaching learners with special needs. It is not the fault of teachers that they don't know how to manage learners with special needs. It so happened that they were not given the opportunity to capacitate themselves with the appropriate competencies in dealing with this type of learner (Kafia, 2015). Teachers who are aware of learners with special needs and the inner world are most likely to have a positive effect on learners' self-image and self-confidence, as they provide a protected learning environment directed by value-based rules. Teachers need to have in-depth knowledge of common special needs to address individual differences of learners in the classroom (Lea, 2015). A regular teacher who has no knowledge of special education but teaches in such an environment may undermine the potential of each student specifically the learners with special needs. The lack of consciousness of inclusive education among teachers, parents, and school administrators, labeled learners with special needs as slow, behind, incapable, and failed learners (Bansalb, 2015).

Role of General Education Teacher

The role of general education teachers in an inclusive classroom is challenging in such a way that they must accept learners with special needs even if it is not fit their expertise, thus, it underlined the process of early detection and intervention for learners with special needs. Teachers should acquire the skills to create a cognitive, emotional, and morally-grounded learning environment (Lea, 2015). Teachers must pay special attention to the individual needs of learners when teaching them or overseeing aspects of their social life and development. Teachers should have more patience with learners with special needs as they need more support than able learners (Kafia, 2015). Teachers must understand the issues associated with supporting any learners with special needs. Teachers must be challenged to assess their knowledge of special education before they can get the correct messages across to fully understand the inclusive perspective (Neilson & Brink, 2015). In addition, teachers face a complex situation in which, on the one hand, they are expected to demonstrate sensitivity, consideration, and empathy and to be able to cope with learners with



special needs, while on the other hand, they are expected to convey to learners with special needs that they believe in their ability to succeed both academically and socially (Talmor, et al., 2016). Teachers felt guilty and frustrated due to the poor adaptation and accommodation in the inclusive classroom (Abbas, et al., 2016). The school should therefore be more than a place where knowledge is transferred, it should ensure to cater to the needs of learners with special needs by providing them the opportunity to access meaningful learning experiences to develop them to become productive members of an inclusive society (Baratz & Kass, 2015).

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is the integration of learners with special needs with their peers in the general education classroom. When all available placement options have been considered it is at this point in a decision is made for specific learners to participate in general education at least for some portion of the day (Edwards, 2016). By history, the concept of mainstreaming was developed in the mid-1980 with an attempt to provide greater access to general education. The idea gave birth to the education reforms movement considered by the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The REI was created to reform the general and special education systems. Its aims launched an educational movement that proposed general education teachers assume the responsibility to educate learners with special needs. This initiative further called for the communication, collaboration, and cooperation of both the general and special education teachers to return learners with mild to moderate special needs back into the general education settings as suggested by Edwards (2016).

Inclusion

Cook (2017) defines inclusion as mainstream schools that accommodate diverse learners that include with needs. Within inclusion, special education services are delivered within the general education classroom. Once inclusion is considered, one should realize that inclusion goes further than mainstream options since it implies that learners seek educational opportunities in the general education environment. Full inclusion reflects that all learners with special needs notwithstanding the pure nature or severity of their special needs should have equal access to receive a quality education in the general education classroom. Tayyaba (2016) believed that inclusion is a new way of thinking about education. It does not only challenges the orthodox and traditional segregated educational system which treats learners based on their ability, but it poses questions on policy, political, social, and economic processes which support this educational system.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education. This denotes that all learners have the right to receive a quality education that tailors to the extent possible to their individual needs (Dela Fuente, 2021; Kafia, 2015). Inclusive education is the placement of all learners including learners with special needs in mainstream classrooms with the necessary support given within the inclusive education system when an educational environment is given the same level of scrutiny as the learners to assess the adaptations needed to achieve a more effective match between the learners' educational needs and the instruction offered. Inclusive education is an approach that develops a learner focus within schools by recognizing that all learners have different learning needs as such inclusive education should be meant of providing educational opportunities for all learners that include learners with special needs (Dapudong, 2014).

No Learners Left Behind Act of 2001

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that *No Learners Left Behind* as such learners with special needs should meet the same content standards as non-disabled learners



for it has implications for both general education and special education teachers. To comply with the IDEA, general education teachers should become more accustomed to how to implement the special education curriculum by designing the curriculum, instruction, and assessment fair to all learners, especially to learners with special needs. (Cooper, et al., 2018).

General Education Teachers in an Inclusive Classroom

Teachers are the learners first to discover the special needs of learners. Typically, they are responsible to identify learners' disabilities as part of the IDEA mandated learners find the program. In addition to identification, the IDEA further requires general education teachers to actively participate in the referral, evaluation, and placement decisions for learners suspected of having a disability. The input from the general education teacher is a crucial component in the process as it offers a first-hand account of how the learners progress in the general education classroom (Johns & Crowley, 2017). The general education teacher also provides information regarding the adverse effect of the suspected disability on the student's educational progress (Tilson, 2015). Kobolt and Zizcak (2016) cited that general education teacher are usually at the forefront of suspecting that a student disability. It is usually the teacher or the parents that begins to notice that the learners are not performing at the same level as other learners. General education teachers are expected to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous student population in an inclusive and mainstream classroom. However, teachers often feel ill-prepared, hence, apprehensive about the inclusion of learners with Special Education Needs (SEN) in the regular classroom (Cate, 2018).

Learners with Special Needs in an Inclusive Classroom

The evolution of including learners with special needs in the general classroom setting has been an issue today. Years ago, individuals with special needs have historically faced discrimination. Now there are several provisions to address the needs of these learners and enable them to learn in an inclusive or mainstream classroom. However general education classes are usually larger than 35 learners at the secondary level. For the most part, teacher training for general education teachers primarily focuses on content areas with minimal training which only describes special needs learners and provides limited knowledge and skills to meet the needs of this diverse population (Dela Fuente, 2021; Edwards, 2016). In the general education classroom, the special needs of learners are expressed in ways that are disruptive to teachers who consequently unconsciously or consciously develop opposition approaches to the learners. Thus, the learners are viewed as heading for failure and a source of frustration in contrast to the rest of the learners in the classroom. In social terms, these learners are rejected, except for their belonging to the group of class clowns (Lea, 2015). In addition, the general education setting is not a setting in which learners generally receive appropriate instruction to help them acquire behavioral and social skills. The worst, most teachers preferred student removal from the classroom setting (Edwards, 2016). Moreover, the most teacher feels that disabled learners in normal class are a burden. They don't have the efficient ability to perform equally with normal learners. Unfortunately, they either ignore the deficiency or blame it on the learners' personality branding it as laziness, an attitude problem, or aggression. The learners continue to graduate from one class to the other inept at handling the pressure of the higher classes (Cate, 2018).

Objectives

The authors are inspired to investigate the level of consciousness on special education of the secondary general education teachers in a select secondary school in the Philippines for School Year (S.Y.) 2018-2019 to determine the real situation of the school in carrying out inclusive education to aid the Department of Education (DepEd) as to the appropriate program for special education. The authors believed that teachers should be aware of special education and the



individual needs of learners to identify the best and most effective teaching strategies to apply. The consciousness of general education teachers on special education will encourage acceptance towards learners with special needs that enables the effective delivery of the teaching and learning process. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education when grouped according to:
 - 1.1. Age
 - 1.2. Sex
 - 1.3. Length of Service
2. Is there a significant difference in the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education when grouped according to:
 - 2.1. Age
 - 2.2. Sex
 - 2.3. Length of Service

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service.

Framework

According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975, special education is a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet learners' unique needs, to assure that the rights of handicapped learners and their parents or guardians are protected, to assist state and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped learners and to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped learners. The three defining features are the following: *a. FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)* which will be provided without charge, must meet state standards, are consistent with the IEP, and include an appropriate preschool, elementary, or secondary school in the state; *b. LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)* ensures a continuum of alternative placements and to the maximum extent possible, learners with special needs are educated with nondisabled peers, it is evaluated at least annually and is based on the learners' IEP, *c. IEP (Individualized Education Program)* is the indicator of ways in which a student's ability influences participation and progress in the general education curriculum. Learners are the center of the learning process, and to effectively teach these learners teachers' knowledge of special education is an important factor in special education to address the specific needs of every individual to ensure that learning is taking place. The Public Law 108-446 *No Learners Left Behind Act* of 2001, specifies that its provision is for all learners, including those with special needs. Individuals with Special needs Education Improvement Act of 2004 states that learners with special needs must be taught by highly qualified teachers who have full certification in Special Education. The DepEd Order 72, s.2009 said that regular schools with or without trained Special Education (SPED) teachers shall be provided educational services to learners with special needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) has been the most influential law on the establishment of learning-disabled services for learners in public schools (Hadley, 2015). Therefore, all teachers, regardless of the type of certification held, must be knowledgeable of the laws and procedures surrounding the education of learners with special needs (Serapiglia, 2016). The important matter that needs to be addressed is the consciousness of the secondary teachers in making the necessary accommodations for learners with special needs in classrooms.

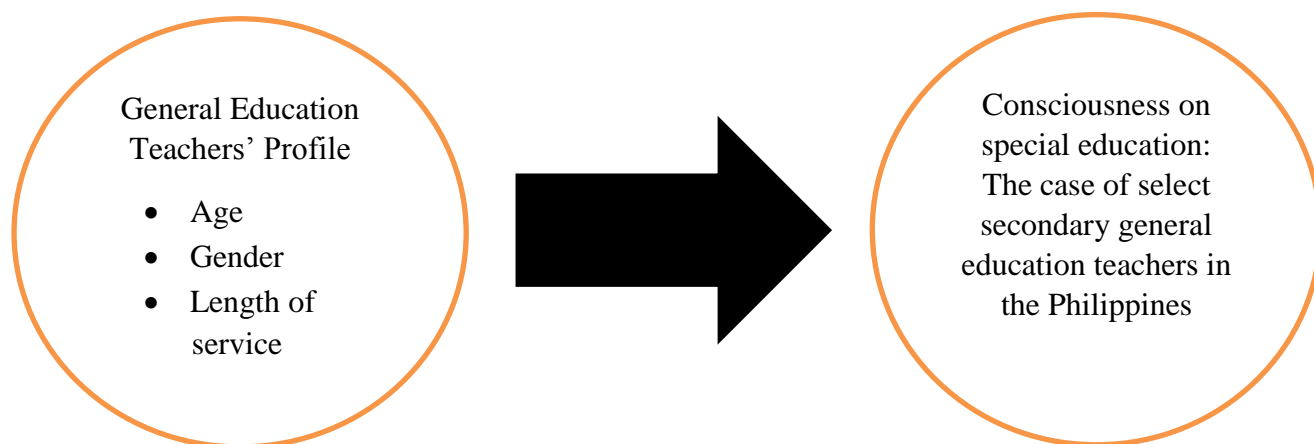


Figure1. Schematic diagram of the flow of the study

Methods

Research Design

Descriptive-survey the research method was used to determine the level of consciousness of the general education teachers on special education. This research method discovers the general picture of the population and the nature of its existing condition. The descriptive method is a technique of quantitative description of the general characteristics of the group. This means that surveys are made to discover some consciousness of regular education teachers to special education and the different special needs of learners.

Participants

The participants of the study were the secondary general education teachers in a selected secondary school in the Philippines that cater to learners with special needs, particularly in the mainstream classroom. The said teachers were the following: eight from grade 7 and grade 10 respectively, and nine from the TLE department with a total of twenty-five purposively selected teachers.

Research Instrument

An authors'-made survey questionnaire was used in collecting the data to generate the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education of secondary general education teachers in teaching learners with special needs in an inclusive learning environment. The authors constructed the questionnaire after an extensive study of the works of literature. Questions were closed-ended. The questionnaire was made up of two parts. The first part asked about the teacher's profile as to sex, age, and length of service. The age was grouped into 20-30, 31-40, and 41 and above. The length of service was categorized as 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and 11 years and above respectively. On the other hand, part two of the instrument is comprised of 39 statements that focused on teachers' consciousness of different special needs with four possible responses: *Very Unaware* (1), *Unaware* (2), *Aware* (3), and *Very Much Aware* (4). In validating the research instrument the authors asked three jurors who were considered experts in the field to validate the survey questionnaire. Using the criteria set forth by Good and Scates the validity was established at 4.18 interpreted as very good. For reliability, Cronbach Alpha was calculated. The analysis showed a reliability of 0.964 in the pilot study. Internal consistency of the questionnaire was measured using Coefficient Alpha on the pilot sample which gives the idea that the developed instrument is reliable. (Ayhan, 2013).



Data Collection

Pre-Implementation

A pilot study was conducted on a group of twenty general education teachers to ascertain clarity in the survey questions. According to the responses regarding the clarity of the survey questions, the reliability test was conducted. The participants involved in the study were excluded from participation in the actual study. The pilot study served the purpose of reviewing teachers' responses to readily ensure that the survey would utilize a test of reliability to measure the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education.

Implementation

A letter was sent to the assistant school superintendent of the Division through the principal to obtain permission to complete the research study within the aforementioned school. When permission was granted to implement the surveys a consent form was sent to all of the general education teachers that cater to inclusion and mainstream classroom at the selected secondary school. The consent form presented an explanation of the survey questions accompanied by the author's contact information in case there are any clarifying questions to be answered during the study. As the surveys were distributed to the participants they were instructed that the authors will personally collect them after one week of the survey distribution. A copy of the survey and consent letter was attached to each of the general education teacher survey questionnaires which informed the participants of the importance and purpose of the survey and assured the anonymity of their participation. The survey process was done in March 2019.

Post-Implementation

The total score from each survey was taken to evaluate the participants' consciousness of special education. The compilation of the data was tabulated with the help of the statistician. The data was then analyzed by comparing each teacher's responses to the survey and it showed that it provided a clear perspective on the teachers' consciousness of special education.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyze the quantitative data generated. All quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaire was placed into a Microsoft Excel file with each question as a variable to set up the database. This Excel file was then transferred and converted into a Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were entered in two parts. Part A included all demographic information provided by the subjects. Part B consisted of the appropriate Likert scale response (4-*Very Much Aware*, 3-*Aware*, 2-*Unaware*, and 1-*Very Much Unaware*). Problem statement 1 was analyzed using the mean, percentage, and frequency values. Problem statement 2 was analyzed using One-way ANOVA for age and length of service, while sex was analyzed using an independent sample t-test. The interpretation of the level of consciousness was based on the scale given below.

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
3.01 – 4.00	High
2.01 – 3.00	Average
1.01 – 2.00	Low

Ethical Consideration

The participants of the study were informed before the collection of data through the use of a consent letter that contained important information about this research and the importance of their participation in the study. The aim was to seek their consent and to ensure voluntary participation



and provision of information. Hence, participation in this study was kept anonymous. The name in the survey questionnaire was labeled optional which would mean that the participants have the choice to write their names or not. In addition, the data collected from the participants were kept confidential and were erased after its use.

Results and Discussion

After quantifying and analyzing the data gathered through a survey questionnaire to general education teachers in a select secondary school in the Philippines that caters to inclusion in the mainstream classroom the study revealed the following results that provide an explicit explanation of the findings.

Table 1. Distribution of participants profile (n=25)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	%
Age	20-30 years old	11	44
	31-40 years old	7	28
	41 years old and above	7	28
Sex	Male	10	40
	Female	15	60
Length of Service	0-5 years	10	40
	6-10 years	6	24
	11 years and above	9	36

Table 1 showed the distribution of the profile of twenty-five (25) participants. Eleven (11) or 44% were ages 20-30 years old, seven (7), or 28% were ages 31-40 years old, and seven (7), or 28% were ages above 40 years old. It showed that majority of the participants were young teachers. In terms of gender, fifteen (15) or 60% were females, slightly higher than males which were ten (10) Or 40%. Lastly, for the length of service, ten (10) participants, or 40% had 1-5 years of teaching experience, six (6) or 24% had 6-10 years of teaching experience and another nine (9) or 36% had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Table 2. Level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education according to age

Age	M	SD	Interpretation
20 – 30	3.0427	.36128	High
31 – 40	2.9071	.39698	Average
41 – above	2.3629	.15553	Average

Table 2 showed that the general education teachers between the ages of 20-30 responded with a high level of consciousness with a mean of 3.0427; the teachers in this group exhibited the highest mean. Teachers between the ages of 31-40 responded with an average level of consciousness with a mean of 2.9071. The age of 41- above responded with an average level of consciousness and exhibited the lowest mean of 2.3629. The result implied that young teachers garnered a high level of consciousness which may be because they had received the most recent education and updated teaching strategies. In the study of Abbas, et al., (2016), results depicted that as the consciousness level in percent decreases so with the increase in age. He noticed that the level of consciousness of



younger age with special education was far better. It is also similar to the study conducted by Stevens (2018), in which almost half of the participants are over the age of fifty. The result showed that most of the participants indicated having inadequate consciousness of information about the faculty’s role in facilitating access services for learners with special needs.

Table 3. Level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education according to sex

Age	M	SD	Interpretation
Male	2.6865	.39599	Average
Female	2.9007	.44453	Average

Table 3 showed that male general education teachers responded with an average level of consciousness with a mean of 2.6856. However, female teachers responded with an average level of consciousness with a mean of 2.9007; the teachers in the female group exhibited the higher mean thus suggesting that female teachers had higher consciousness on special education. Nevertheless, the result of this study implied that both male and female general education teachers had obtained an average level of consciousness on special education. This was supported by the study conducted by Oneke (2014), results suggested that male participants have a low level of consciousness thus it was perceived that they will face more challenges working with learners with special education needs.

Table 4. Level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education according to the length of service

Age	M	SD	Interpretation
0 - 5	2.9310	.25309	Average
6 - 10	3.1967	.48307	High
11 – above	2.4300	.21541	Average

Table 4 showed that the general education teachers with 0-5 years of teaching experience garnered a mean of 2.9310 which was interpreted as an average level of consciousness. Teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience garnered a mean of 3.196 which was interpreted as a high level of consciousness. Lastly, teachers with 11 and above years of teaching experience garnered the lowest mean of 2.4300 which was interpreted as the average level of consciousness. The group of teachers with 6-10 years of teaching exhibited the highest mean. The result implied that teachers who were in the 6-10 years in service had a high level of consciousness. This may be because they had received the most recent education and had been in service for some- time. This was concerning the statement of Chaney (2017), in which according to him, it was assumed that the curriculum within each teacher’s preparation program served as the foundation for his or her career as a teacher as what they have learned is still fresh in their memory. This was similar to the result of the study conducted by Edwards (2016), in which he found that the general education teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience in this subgroup would have exhibited the highest mean because they have received the most recent education. The subgroup of 20 and over years of teaching experience exhibited the lowest mean maybe because these teachers were more than likely not expected to satisfy special education knowledge within their credential process.



Table 5. Significant difference in the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education according to age

Age	M	SD	F	p	Interpretation
20 – 30	3.0427	.36128	9.462	0.001	Significant difference
31 – 40	2.9071	.39698			
41 – above	2.3629	.15553			

As shown in table 5, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the age differences (20-30, 31-40, 41 - above). The level of consciousness of general education teachers when grouped according to age showed that there was a statistically significant relationship as denoted by the computed p-values of 0.001, respectively which are less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in these variables. This implied that young and old teachers had varying levels of consciousness on special education. In the study of Abbas, et al., (2016), findings showed the highest and lowest consciousness level of both education concepts (special and inclusive) in age groups 25-30 and 51-55 years, respectively. Tayyaba (2016) also claimed in his study that the young age group showed a strong consciousness level about special and inclusive education compared to the senior group.

Table 6. Significant difference in the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education according to sex

Age	M	SD	t	p	Interpretation
Male	2.6865	.39599	.209	0.652	Not significant difference
Female	2.9007	.44453			

An independent samples t-test as shown in table 6 was used to compare the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education between male and female participants. There was no significant difference in the level of consciousness of general education teachers when grouped according to sex as denoted by the computed p-values of 0.625, respectively which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted on these variables. This implied that sex was not a factor in the level of consciousness of teachers in special education. The result of this study was similar to Kern (2016), showing that no significant difference existed between male and female teachers concerning their consciousness of inclusive education. Although not statistically significant, the gender difference suggested the possibility that female teachers' consciousness of special education was higher than that of male teachers. It was also worth mentioning that there were more female teacher participants in the study than males. In contrast, the result of the study by Oneke, et al., (2014), showed that there was a significant difference in the responses of males and females. Results suggested that male participants perceived that they faced more challenges working with learners having special education needs. However, no significant difference was found between male and female participants on the general perceptions of inclusion or the concept of inclusion.

Table 7. Significant difference in the level of consciousness of general education teachers on special education according to length of service

Age	M	SD	F	p	Interpretation
1 - 5	2.9310	.25309	12.19	0.001	Significant difference
6 - 10	3.1967	.48307			
11 – above	2.4300	.21541			



As shown in table 7, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the differences in length of service (0-5, 6-10, 11 - above). The level of consciousness of general education teachers when grouped according to the length of service showed that there was a statistically significant relationship as denoted by the computed p-values of 0.001, respectively which are less than the 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected in these variables. This is in agreement with the result of the study conducted by Oneke, et al., (2014), who claimed that there was a significant difference between teachers who have taught for 0-5 years and teachers who have taught for 11 years or more. However, the difference in the years of teaching experience is contrary to the result of this study. According to him teachers with 11 or more years of experience had significantly high consciousness which implies more positive perceptions towards including learners with special education needs than teachers who had 0-5 years of teaching experience. Teachers with more teaching experience may have a better way of working with all learners.

Conclusion

Based on the results extracted from the data gathered, the researcher came up with a conclusion that further and intensive development on the consciousness of general education teachers on special education must be given attention and priority considering that there was an average level of consciousness among the teachers. It was emphasized in the study also that there was a significant difference in the level of consciousness in terms of age and length of service, however, there was no significant difference in terms of sex. Keeping the teachers, especially those old ones, updated through participating in seminars and training on special education can make them aware of the different aspects of special education. Likewise, younger teachers with recent education in special education must share their knowledge with the old ones. Generally, as far as the consciousness of special education was concerned, enhancing the consciousness of general education teachers was necessary to assure that learners with special needs can access the general education curriculum with non-disabled peers.

Recommendations

Teachers' consciousness of special education affects the extent to which they are willing and able to implement inclusive education practices. After this study has been conducted, the researcher formulated the following recommendations. The curriculum planners can use the result of the study to reflect on themselves critically on their curricular decision-making and practices, instructional arrangements, strategies, and methods of assessment and initiate changes to support teachers in their professional development to be equipped in teaching learners with special needs. The school administrators can create or include special education on seminars or training of teachers so that they can be provided with the necessary teaching strategies that are appropriate to the different needs of learners. Programs or activities where regular learners and learners with special needs can collaborate may be planned and implemented so that discrimination will be avoided. General education teachers must involve themselves in training and seminars that will enhance their skills and knowledge to address the needs and help develop the full potential of the learners. This training will further allow general education teachers to become knowledgeable and well-versed in special education practices and to effectively implement special education services for disabled learners in a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). They should prepare and manage positively the special needs of the learners in their classrooms. They must exhibit fairness and equality in dealing with different learners. Including learners with special needs in general education, classrooms must mean more than their mere physical placement, they must be given accurate and appropriate services that will develop their interest and provide opportunities that will prepare them as productive citizens in society despite their special needs. Their learning experiences will become meaningful if they will be



provided with fair and just learning opportunities. The result of the study can be beneficial to future researchers in conducting further studies related to special education. This can serve as a reference for exploring other variables that can be significant to special education.

Limitations of the study

As with any study, some factors can affect the results of the research. One limitation is the willingness and availability of participants. It was difficult to find a good time for all the teachers to take the survey during the school day. The researchers made every effort to finish the survey in time even though teachers are very busy doing school forms and preparing for closing activities that sometimes bring prejudices to my work. Some limitations of this study were the small number of teachers that were surveyed and the fact that data were gathered from only 25 teachers. It provided insight into the understanding that general education teachers may teach learners with special needs in a general classroom setting. The issues identified in the study offer intriguing possibilities for further research, but the small size of the teacher educators surveyed and the use of only special needs consciousness may be enhanced.

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