



Scan to know paper details and author's profile

Examining Pre and In-Service Teachers Views of their Preparation for Inclusive Education

Rasela Tufue, Sueala Kolone-Collins, Jackie Ah Hoy Wright & Fuamoli Amituana'i

National University of Samoa

ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusive education (IE) suffered many challenges some of which have been linked to teachers' lack of knowledge and understanding to teach in an IE environment. In Samoa, it is now almost two decades since the inclusive education (IE) phenomenon has been introduced into its education system, however it is still not clear how teachers feel about their preparation to teach in an IE environment. This qualitative research examined teachers' views concerning their teacher preparation for IE. Using an open ended questionnaire, data was gathered from 94 pre and in-service primary school teachers who were in 2022 trained within the faculty of education (FOE) at the National University of Samoa. Findings indicated that teachers needed adequate IE courses to prepare them to teach in an IE classroom as the single IE course that is currently offered by the faculty is not sufficient to provide them with the requisite knowledge and skills to teach in an IE environment. Findings also suggested that limited IE knowledge suffered from the absence of an IE program and lack of opportunity for teachers to practice learned skills within an IE environment which in turn affected their confidence to teach in such context. This has greater implication on teacher training preparations, hence the need for the training institution to develop programs in IE so teachers are well equipped to work in such context is very crucial.

Keywords: teacher preparations, inclusive education, professional development.

Classification: DDC Code: 370

Language: English



Great Britain
Journals Press

LJP Copyright ID: 573350
Print ISSN: 2515-5785
Online ISSN: 2515-5792

London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences

Volume 23 | Issue 14 | Compilation 1.0



Examining Pre and In-Service Teachers Views of their Preparation for Inclusive Education

Rasela Tufue^a, Sueala Kolone-Collins^a, Jackie Ah Hoy Wright^b & Fuamoli Amituana'i^c

ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusive education (IE) suffered many challenges some of which have been linked to teachers' lack of knowledge and understanding to teach in an IE environment. In Samoa, it is now almost two decades since the inclusive education (IE) phenomenon has been introduced into its education system, however it is still not clear how teachers feel about their preparation to teach in an IE environment. This qualitative research examined teachers' views concerning their teacher preparation for IE. Using an open ended questionnaire, data was gathered from 94 pre and in-service primary school teachers who were in 2022 trained within the faculty of education (FOE) at the National University of Samoa. Findings indicated that teachers needed adequate IE courses to prepare them to teach in an IE classroom as the single IE course that is currently offered by the faculty is not sufficient to provide them with the requisite knowledge and skills to teach in an IE environment. Findings also suggested that limited IE knowledge suffered from the absence of an IE program and lack of opportunity for teachers to practice learned skills within an IE environment which in turn affected their confidence to teach in such context. This has greater implication on teacher training preparations, hence the need for the training institution to develop programs in IE so teachers are well equipped to work in such context is very crucial.

Keywords: teacher preparations, inclusive education, professional development.

Author a σ p CQ: National University of Samoa.

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education (IE) has become the buzz word of the 21st century where many countries including Samoa, scrambled to develop and implement inclusive policy within their education system. Inclusive education suggests that all 'students regardless, of disability status, benefit from and should have access to grade level standards and opportunities in the general education classroom, (Courtade, Spooner, Browder, & Jimenez, 2012). Inclusive education however comes with a lot of challenges in terms of available facilities and trained teachers. Hence, for inclusive education to work, necessary preparation is crucial not only in physical facilities but of the utmost import in teacher preparation. According to Forlin (2010) 'a reconsideration of teacher training practices and programs is a significant priority in teacher education research to warrant that future teachers are ready to practice inclusive teaching.' The concern for researchers of this paper is that only one course on inclusive education is offered by the faculty of education (FOE) in their teacher preparation program. It begs the question, how adequate is this one course to fully prepare teachers to teach in an IE classroom?

II. STUDY CONTEXT

When the concept of special education was first coined in the mid 1990's in Samoa, it was a new concept to many individuals, however Samoa indicated its commitment to this new phenomenon by including it as one of its policy goals in its Education Policies 1995-2006. Samoa's educational policies and planning today are influenced by global mandates such as the Education For All (EFA), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

(UNESCO), the Education for Sustainable Development strategies (ESD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as regional commitments such as the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP), the Pacific Region Initiative for the Delivery of Basic education (PRIDE) and the Pacific Plan (Government of Samoa, 2006, p. 11). As such, national policy goals in relation to special education, emphasised the importance of training teachers in the area of special education (Samoa Education Policies 1995-2006) which resulted in the Western Samoa Teachers College (WSTC) developing a diploma program in special education in 1995. The diploma program consisted of one general introductory course plus four specialized courses in Special education. In the mid 2000, the introduction of the inclusive education phenomenon at the global level was a paradigm shift from specialization to inclusion of children with special needs into the regular classrooms. National and educational policies were redirected towards a more inclusive type of teaching and learning environment, which resulted in the modification of the introductory special education course to be more inclusive in nature. In 2014, program restructuring within the faculty of education (FOE) led to the discontinuation of the diploma program in special education. When the diploma program was discontinued, so too were the 4 special education courses with the exception of the introductory course (aka 'inclusive education') which was retained and modified to be offered as a compulsory course for all individuals who wished to pursue the teaching the profession. This one inclusive course is the only course that is currently offered as a compulsory course for teachers in the bachelor and graduate diploma programs. The rationale was for every teacher to have at least some knowledge of IE. This begs the question, "Is the single introductory course on IE sufficient to prepare preservice teachers to teach in an inclusive classroom? With the many criticism from the public arena concerning teacher quality, the researchers are seriously concern that the single course that FOE currently offers is far from adequate in preparing teachers for IE. This study was aimed at examining teachers' views on their

teacher preparation program with regards to preparing them to teach in an IE environment. The main question that guided the study was:

- What are teachers' perceptions concerning their preparations to teach in an inclusive education environment?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of preparing teachers so they become effective in supporting learning needs of students within an inclusive environment cannot be overemphasized. Amongst factors that were found to impede inclusive education (IE) is limited knowledge in IE, which seemed to affect teachers' attitude towards IE. It has been argued that teachers' attitudes can determine the day-to-day practices of classroom teachers and according to Alieto (2018) attitude can act as either a facilitating or debilitating factor. A number of studies that investigated school educators' attitudes toward inclusive education (e.g., Forlin, 2004; 2003; Forlin, Jobling & Caroll, 2001; Loreman, 2002; Subban & Sharma, 2006) indicated that teachers in general appear to be more supportive of IE rhetorically but have misgivings in the actual implementation. Factors that seem to influence teachers' attitudes were related to the educational environment (support services, classroom layout, class size, curriculum, funding and time); the student (severity of disability, lack of time to teach student with disability); as well as the teacher training (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Bradshaw & Lawrence, 2006).

A meta-analysis which involved 28 survey reports was executed by Shruggs and Mastropieri (1996) between 1958 and 1995 which concerned with teacher attitudes towards mainstreaming in USA, Canada and Australia, found that although two thirds of teachers were generally supportive of the integration concept, one third or less believed that they had insufficient time, skills, training and resources necessary to address the needs of students with disabilities. Vaughn, Schumm, Jallad, Slusher & Saumell (1996) also identified high class numbers, funds, teachers' overload and issues related to standardized evaluation to affect

teachers' attitude towards IE. Moreover, factors related to teachers' workload (Brennan, 2002), class size, limited resources and teacher training (Lifshitz, Glaubman & Issawi, 2004) were also indicated to inhibit successful inclusion of all students.

Furthermore, challenges related to time plus acquiring appropriate resources to support certain disabilities in the classroom (Harris & Stephenson, 2003; Jahnukainen & Korhonen, 2003; Jenkins, 2002; Westwood, 2003) were also found as barriers to IE. As reported by Sutherland (2000) the high school teachers expressed feelings of helplessness as they felt that they did not have the time or the expertise to deal with the high needs of these students. This notion of teacher helplessness was also reported by Watson (2004) in a study of secondary teachers. He stated that teachers feel, 'isolated, frustrated, and overburdened' (p. 11), in trying to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties in the mainstream.

With regards to severity of student's disability as impacting on attitude, Campbell, Gilmore, and Cuskelly (2003) argued that teachers have a certain attitude towards and treatment of specific students in their class due to factors such as severity of the student's disability, the challenges posed by the student behaviour and the lack of time to teach these group of students. In the same vein, Hastings and Oakford (2003) argued that irrespective of teaching experience, the severity of disability showed an inverse relationship with positive attitudes in that, the increase in severity the decrease in positivity in teachers' attitudes. It appears that (Fyssa; Vlachou, Avramidis, 2014; Pappas, Papoutsi, Drigas, 2018; Rakap, Kaczmarek, 2010) teachers are more acceptable of students with mild disabilities as opposed to students with more severe disabilities and challenging behaviour. Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma (2011) seemed to share the same sentiment that teachers seemed to have no reservations in integrating students with learning difficulties who do not seem to require extra support.

The literature in affirming the impact of teacher attitude on the implementation of IE programmes and policies (Sharma, Loreman & Earle, 2006) highlighted teacher limited knowledge as one of the significant factors which affect these attitudes, hence what Idol (1997) suggested makes a lot of sense if teachers are to be able to survive within an IE setting. He submitted that teachers need additional tools and skills to cope with the social and emotional problems that accompany inclusive schooling (1997). A UNESCO study that was focused on school improvements was conducted on teacher education in 14 countries in 1980. The study targeted teaching strategies for inclusion and found that the majority of teachers were willing to accept learners with special needs in their classes but they lacked the confidence due to limited training. Lack of training preparation and experience in dealing with students with special needs can greatly affect teachers' attitude towards IE as also noted by Chhabra, Srivastava, & Srivastava (2010). They indicated that the teachers' negativity towards IE, stem from a sense of unpreparedness which led to a feeling of dread and additional stress as they were already coping with a diverse set of student needs.

Training is something that is crucial for teachers as it helps them with the strategies to deal with learners who have special needs (Salend, 1984). By the same token, Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) maintained that gaining substantial training in special education led to a significantly higher positive attitude than those who received no training about inclusion. If teachers are well prepared (through training), they are in a much better position to manage emotional and behavioural issues (Forlin, Earle, Loreman. & Sharma, 2011) that they may encounter within the IE classroom. Therefore it is important to make available inclusive education courses for professional development of teachers as this not only diminishes teacher resistance to inclusive education practice but eases their anxiety (Avramidis, Bayliss, Burden, 2000 & Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007).

Based on the literature being reviewed the importance of training as it relates to changed attitude (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002) and to

manage an inclusive classroom cannot be overstated. The limited IE courses that are available to prepare teacher trainees at FOE is a great concern for lecturers involved in this study; hence the need to find out from the currently trained teachers their own views concerning their preparations for an IE classroom environment. Previous research that were undertaken on IE in Samoa were based on the perspective of policy makers, and practitioners' (Tufue-Dolgoy, 2010) however, no research had been conducted on views of pre and in-service teachers with regards to their training preparations for IE, hence the impetus for the current study.

IV. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore participants' views about their teacher preparation pertaining to inclusive education and their preparedness to teach within an IE classroom. The objectives were two folds:

- To explore novice and practicing teachers' experiences of their teacher preparation to teach in an inclusive education environment;
- To examine factors that may facilitate and/ or inhibit a teachers' practice within an inclusive education setting;

The focus question that guided this study was:

- What are pre service and practicing teachers' views with respect to their teacher preparation as it pertains to inclusive education?

The following research questions were explored in this study:

- How could educational preparation (training etc) be improved to more fully prepare teachers for an inclusive classroom?
- Do you feel you have had sufficient preparation to teach children with special needs in a classroom?
- What are your views concerning the value of the current IE course (offered by FOE) in preparing teachers for an IE classroom?
- What type of support would be helpful to you to teach in an inclusive classroom?

- What do you think are factors that could facilitate inclusive practices or make inclusion successful?
- What do you think are factors which could inhibit inclusive practices or lead to failure for inclusion?
- What do you see as some of the challenges that concerns you most teaching in an inclusive classroom?

V. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to gather information using open ended questions. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that targets the cohesiveness of a specific group's lived experiences. It aims to describe the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). We employed this design as it provided the opportunity for participants to describe the meaning of their lived experiences regarding the phenomenon which in this case is their experience of their teaching preparation in IE. The hermeneutical phenomenology was used in that it depends on the researcher's interpretations of what the individuals lived experience means (ibid). The gathering and presentation of explanations and descriptions from teachers' responses were classified into responses that show evidence of similarity or uniqueness. These were reclassified to enable a manageable analysis of data. Purposive criterion sampling was used to identify 94 pre and in service teachers who were undergoing teacher training in the bachelor of education program at FOE, NUS, in 2022. An open-ended survey questionnaire comprising of 7 questions were distributed to the 94 participants. Participants were approached during their course of study at the university and were given a cover letter and consent form explaining their rights as participants. Written consent were obtained and each participant were assigned a pseudonym. They were required to fill in the survey form and submit within a week. A phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted. The data was read and reread and discarded for like phrases and themes that were then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Through this process the

researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

The result of this study is significant as it will inform our program development and practices as teacher educators at the National University of Samoa. Similarly, the results will assist policy makers at the MESC in relation to means in which they could support teachers in inclusive education classrooms.

VI. FINDINGS

This research was aimed at examining pre and in service teachers' views of their teacher preparations in inclusive education. After analysis of data, a number of categories emerged as they relate to questions pertaining to; *Training preparations, IE course relevance and Trainee preparedness, IE required support, Facilitating factors, Inhibiting factors as well as Trainee concerns*. These categories were further analyzed to arrive at minor themes and ultimately mega themes as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Teacher preparation for IE and influential factors

QUESTIONS	CATEGORIES	SUB THEMES	MEGA THEMES	
1. Necessary Educational preparation (training etc)	Training – Theory/ Course contents Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Training needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Teacher preparation/Training requirements ❖ Attitude ❖ Resource (Physical and Human) ❖ School/community collaboration 	
	Research and observation in IE Needs training knowledge in sign language and braille			
	IE Experts/trainers	<input type="checkbox"/> Value of IE specialists/ Experts		
2. IE course relevance and teacher preparedness	Value of compulsory IE course	<input type="checkbox"/> IE course relevancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Teacher preparation/Training requirements ❖ Attitude ❖ Resource (Physical and Human) ❖ School/community collaboration 	
	Insufficient preparations --inadequate IE courses	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher preparation deficiency		
3. Support required for an inclusive classroom?	Specialized training in sign language/braille (FOE/NUS)	<input type="checkbox"/> Training preparations (Training institute factor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Teacher preparation/Training requirements ❖ Attitude ❖ Resource (Physical and Human) ❖ School/community collaboration 	
	IE expert trainer			
	Experienced practitioner	<input type="checkbox"/> Community/school collaboration		
	Collaboration-community/school			
4. Facilitating/Inhibiting factors for IE success	Resources (Govt)	<input type="checkbox"/> Financial support (Govt)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Teacher preparation/Training requirements ❖ Attitude ❖ Resource (Physical and Human) ❖ School/community collaboration 	
	Teacher knowledge / skills / experience in IE	<input type="checkbox"/> Training/teacher preparation		

5. Teacher concerns	Attitude-parents/,teachers, communities, schools, Classroom teacher personality / attitude- Innovative, caring, patient, loving	<input type="checkbox"/> Attitude (external/internal factor)	
	Classmate positive attitude		
	Good leadership and management skills-principal		
	Teacher lack of awareness in different types of disabilities		
	Personality/ attitude of the learner with special needs	<input type="checkbox"/> Personality - student with special needs	
	Teacher aide	<input type="checkbox"/> Resource – human /physical resource	
	Specialized resources e.g. braille, sign language, insufficient reading material		
	Teachers & parents collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> School / community collaboration	
	Teacher limited knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher preparation (via training etc)	
5. Teacher concerns	Poor school environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning environment	
	Insufficient resources to support disabled students		
	Time factor	<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom management (can also relate to teacher preparation)	
	Syllabus		
	Unfavorable attitude-students, teachers, parents, school, community	<input type="checkbox"/> Attitude	

VII. EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION (TRAINING ETC)

The question which concerns with educational preparation was connected to the training institution and teacher preparedness for IE. Additionally it dealt with ways in which teachers preparation for IE classrooms could be improved. Analysis of this question came up with five categories: *Training, Practice, Research and observation in IE, More resources, IE Experts/trainers*. These were re-categorized under two broad themes: *Teacher training needs and Value IE specialists/Experts* as will be presented below. These themes are presented below.

VIII. TEACHER TRAINING NEEDS

Data indicated that the majority of participants have limited knowledge and skills in IE. Inherent in this view is the notion that teachers are not adequately prepared to work in an IE classroom. Participants indicated their need for more skills and knowledge to enable them to teach in an inclusive education setting as reflected in the following comments:

Teachers preparation for an IE should be sufficient in terms of theories and philosophical beliefs in ways to better the teaching for students (P11)

As alluded to earlier, the need for the institution to develop more courses to give teachers a better understanding of learners and their needs was a significant finding as it arose several times:

The institution must have more courses that deal with handling students with disabilities (P90)

One of the critical areas pertaining to teacher preparation relates to the importance of practicing learned ideas in the IE classroom. For example, more than fifty percent indicated their need for a more practical aspect of IE as this is where they put into practice the theories, ideas and concepts that they learn in IE. These participants commented:

There needs to be a program where students go to the field for experience. The experience of being present in the IE environment is crucial (P30)

This notion of practicing IE ideas is well connected to the need to observe and undertake research within an inclusive classroom or within a special school setting as voiced by some participants:

I need to go out and observe schools like Loto Taumafai, where students with disabilities are (P41)

One other area in connection with teacher preparation that was highlighted in the findings relates to sufficient and special resources such as; braille and sign language as well as the need for teachers to be knowledgeable in using these resources. The sign language materials and brailed machines are available at FOE however they are not utilized and practiced by teachers due to a lack of specialized or knowledgeable individuals who can effectively use these resources as indicated by this comment:

There should be resources like braille to be used for the training. As well as sign language to improve, there should also be specialized teachers for this area (P22)

8.1 Value of IE Specialist/Experts

The worth of being trained by specialized trainers with the expertise in specialized areas such as in the use of sign language and braille was a very significant finding as indicated by more than half of the population. At the moment the two inclusive education lecturers who hold some qualifications in inclusive education, have a good ground in theoretical and philosophical understanding of inclusive education, but lack the specialized skills such as the use of braille and sign language. These are the practical skills the participants seem to require in their IE trainings and preparations. Limited access to this support can be one great obstacle in preparing teachers for IE. The following comments seem to reflect this need:

Teachers need to be trained by specialized individuals (with specialized skills) who are working with special needs (P81)

IX. IE COURSE RELEVANCE AND TEACHER PREPAREDNESS

The question which concerned with relevancy of the one IE course (HED 191 Introduction to IE) that is currently offered for all teachers in addition to teacher IE preparedness came up with the following categories: *Great value of Current IE course, Insufficient preparations, Need for more IE courses*. These categories were further reorganised under the two broad themes: *IE Course relevance and Teacher preparation deficiency* as will be presented below.

9.1 IE Course Relevance

With respect to relevance or not of the currently available IE course, more than half of the respondents indicated the relevance of the current IE course however, this one course would not adequately prepare them to teach in an IE classroom setting. They need more courses to be made available in IE as indicated by the following comments:

... at the moment there is only one course that teaches us about inclusive education and I don't think this is enough to help me how to face challenges in IE (P.90)

I think HED191 is very relevant and crucial for teachers. I used not to value children with special needs. However, when I became involved in research and interview people with special needs, I came to learn to acknowledge the needs of people with special needs (P6)

One of the practitioner who is already working in the field but is currently upgrading her qualification also commented on the relevance of the IE course for her work:

HED 191 benefit me as a teacher. I had students with disability and I have no idea nor understanding on how to handle them, but HED 191 has given me huge knowledge ...

and also being able to work together with parents helped a lot (P85).

9.2 Teacher Preparation Deficiency

With respect to teacher preparedness to teach in an IE classroom, the majority indicated their lack of readiness to teach in an IE classroom. This deficiency seem to affect teachers' confidence to work in an IE setting as noted by these comments:

No I do not have the skills to face students with disabilities so I don't think I can handle because I lack the skills (P37).

As alluded to earlier, participants applauded the relevance of the one available IE course however it is not sufficient to inform their understanding about teaching children with special needs and to address the challenges that may arise. This participant has this to say:

... at the moment there is only one course that teaches about inclusive education and I think it is not enough to face challenges Because we only take and inclusive course in one semester within 3 years so I lack the experience and I need more time to spend on the course before working in the field (P90)

X. SUPPORT REQUIRED FOR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

The question that dealt with the type of support required for IE came up with the following categories: *Specialized training in sign lang/braille, IE expert trainer, Experienced teachers, Collaboration- community / school, Funds for Resources (Govt)*. Further analysis of these categories generated three themes namely: *Training preparations, Community/school collaboration and Financial support (Govt)*. which are presented below.

10.1 Training Preparations

As had been highlighted in previous themes; the importance of training as it relates to teacher preparation has again emerged in connection to necessary support for IE. For example, the majority emphasized the importance of having

specialized training in sign language and braille in preparation for a child who could only communicate using sign language or braille. The following comment reflects this need:

I need to learn how to use sign language and be able to understand other special needs such as visual impaired and ways to support these students (aside from those with hearing problem) (P77)

10.2 Community/School Collaboration

Additionally the support from the community was also evident. For example, several participants pointed to the vital support from parents via a community and school collaboration since parents have a better understanding of their own child as noted here:

Parent support is crucial i.e. we teachers need to work collaboratively with parents so that we know the needs and wants of special needs students (P21)

There were also participants who acknowledged the support of other individuals from special schools and IE contexts for shared knowledge and expertise. i.e., a close collaboration between the university and individuals who teach in special schools similarly individuals who work in special schools was considered essential based on this comment:

It is great to have the support from other persons who work in special school so we will have an understanding of all types of disabilities and how to teach the blind and deaf students (P31)

10.3 Financial support (Govt)

Although not many participants mentioned this aspect however it is worth noting for it can impact on IE. It was suggested for the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESC) to provide support via educational tools and facilities e.g., building ramps. We can very well relate to the importance of appropriate facilities for success of IE. We could use our own institution as an example of a non-inclusive environment. For

example, although some ramps are put in place however lack of lifts and ramps for upstairs rooms can greatly inhibit mobility of a leaner who is wheel chair bound.

XI. FACILITATING AND INHIBITING FACTORS FOR IE SUCCESS

The two questions which asked participants regarding factors that could enhance and or debilitate IE were collapsed into one and the following categories emerged: *Teacher knowledge/skills, Teacher disposition, Positive attitude, Teacher aide, Specialized resources e.g. braille, sign language, Good leadership, Teachers & parents collaboration*. These categories were further analyzed and generated the following 5 themes: *Teacher Training preparation, Resource – human /physical, Attitude, Student personality and School / Community collaboration*. Narrative based on these themes are presented below.

11.1 Teacher Training Preparation

Again as noted in other themes, the notion of training has also emerged as a top theme under this category. One of the outstanding factors that can either facilitate or inhibit IE concerns with the knowledge and skills to deal with children who have special needs. This knowledge and skill however comes from effective training which can then be transferred by teachers to the IE classroom. This participant commented on the importance of teacher knowledge in enhancing IE:

Factors to facilitate IE practice in the classroom, are the skills that a teacher must have to juggle teaching special students and normal students in the same room. Normal students will obviously catch up faster than special needs student (P30).

On the other hand, limited knowledge in IE can greatly affect one's understanding of IE. The majority of participants reported they have very limited teacher knowledge and skills in dealing with various needs of children which makes it very challenging for them:

For me it is really hard for myself to teach these students as I don't know anything about

sign language and ways to draw their attention (P2).

11.2 Resource – Human /Physical Resource

Other factors that can affect IE, relates to human resource in this case teachers to support IE. For example, findings highlighted the importance of having teacher aides to support the child who may have a special need in the classroom as this will allow the classroom teacher access to other students:

Inclusive education can be facilitated by having two teachers in the classroom, one to work with special needs and the other to work with non special needs children (P74)

Additionally, the availability of specialized resources such as brailed machine and personnel who can use sign language was also considered as an important consideration for IE.

There should be resources like braille and sign language to be used for the training ...there should also be specialized teachers for this area (P22).

11.3 Attitude

Attitude plays a major role for success or failure of IE i.e., positive attitude breeds success while a negative hints at failure. The participants alluded to the importance of having a positive attitude from classmates, the school community and parents as this facilitates IE:

Students mingle around with students who have special needs, they should also encourage to treat these students as their own brother because some students look down on these students and make fun of students with disabilities in the classroom (P26)

Negative attitude on the other hand can be an obstacle towards IE. For example, the participants indicated that negative behavior towards the child who may have a special needs can hinder IE practices.

Children [with special needs) may go through bullying and discrimination in class and this can affect their desire to be in class (P40)

Some participants indicated that the characteristics of the teacher can also be a facilitating or debilitating factor. For instance a teacher who is innovative, caring, patient and loving was deemed critical for IE success:

The teacher should be compassionate, have love, patience and must have enough time to connect to the child with a special needs (P20)

11.4 Student Personality

Child related factors were also highlighted to affect IE success for instance, some participants commented that the attitude of the child with special needs can be a facilitator or hindrance to IE.

Some students with special needs require more time to learn and speak since they have low self esteem. Some of them do not seem to care whether they learn something or not and some get easily distracted (P4)

11.5 School / Community Collaboration

Participants also stressed the importance of a collaborative relationship between the community and school for IE success. For example some parents can be utilized as a resource person to support the classroom teacher. The parent of the child who may have a special condition can be allowed into the classroom to offer the necessary support for the child while the teacher concentrates on other learners. This support can filter into the homes where parents can be encouraged to support their children in their home study.

I think teachers should work together with parents...they can provide them with some basic skills and knowledge to support their children (P80)

XII. TEACHER CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES TEACHING IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

The question which dealt with concerns and challenges that teachers may have with respect to teaching in an inclusive setting came up with these categories: *Teacher limited knowledge, Time factor impacting the syllabus, Unfavorable attitude, insufficient resources to support disabled students, poor learning environment*. These categories were further analyzed and generated 4 themes; *Teacher training preparation, Classroom management, Attitude and Learning environment* which are presented below.

12.1 Teacher Training Preparation

The category pertaining to teacher challenges and concerns regarding IE saw participants being very much perplexed by their limited knowledge in IE. This insufficient knowledge make them feel very vulnerable to practice within an IE environment. Again the concept of limited knowledge as a result of inadequate training preparations has been viewed as a major concern in this section:

One thing which really worries me as a future teacher is my limited knowledge of various disabilities and strategies to support them. e.g., visual impairment students need a braille machine but I don't have much experience in using such resources.. (P21)

12.2 Classroom Management

A number of participants were quite concern with time factor in relation to their daily work plan. For example, participants indicated that teachers may not have ample time to help other students if s/he would have to concentrate on children with special needs. Consequently this will affect syllabus coverage i.e., other aspect of the teacher's daily plan may not be effectively fulfilled if extra time is to be spent in supporting learners who may learn at a very slow pace:

Some of the challenges that concerns me is time management while teaching. It is obvious that I must make sure the special

student is on track and is able to understand at the same time not to neglect students who do not have special needs (P30)

12.3 Attitude

One of the participants' concerns was associated to unreceptive attitude from students, teachers (*school community*) and parents towards the student with special needs. An example of a student unfavorable attitude is reflected by this comment:

I believe the student with a disability may not understand of may not have the ability to learn because the student who are considered normal may disagree or discourage the student with disability (P5)

Similarly the teacher's prejudiced attitude has been viewed as a concern as it can affect IE as reflected by this comment:

Avoid giving all attention to the poor student with disability because it will make the others feel jealous and think that I am bias. This may lead to other problems (P.49)

12.4 Learning Environment

A further concern for IE in relation to IE practice was connected to limited resource and poor learning environment to support students with special needs within the classrooms. Physical resource has always been one of the common global issues concerning IE mainly in low socioeconomic contexts. The prevalent high teacher student ratio issue within the Samoan context can be challenging for IE. For example, how would a learner who is wheel chair bound maneuver his way around a room full of students? This will definitely defeat the purpose of IE as reflected by this comment:

There should be enough teachers to teach in this area. The environment should be perfect example, school building resources to support children and of course cleanliness. If these areas are well prepared, the children will be successful in the future (P.6)

This section has provided a presentation of findings based on categories and subthemes. The next section discusses the mega themes that emerged from subtheme themes: *Teacher Preparations and Training requirements, Human resource, Attitude, and School/Community collaboration.*

XIII. DISCUSSION

This study was driven by the assumption that the training institution may not be adequately preparing teachers for an IE classroom given that only one course on IE is currently available to teachers within this study context. Teachers were examined concerning their views about their preparations in IE. After an in-depth analysis of data, four major themes emerged which forms the basis of the discussion. These include: *Teacher Preparations and Training requirements, Human resource, Attitude, and School/Community collaboration.*

The overall findings indicated that teachers have limited knowledge and skills to teach in an IE environment. This limited teacher knowledge and skills were attributed to the limited number of courses that are offered by the training institution. As alluded to earlier, there is only one IE course that is currently offered in IE which implies a lack of an available IE program. The lack of a program in IE can also imply that whatever knowledge or skills in IE that teachers may have had are unlikely to be practiced within a real IE classroom and may have further affected teachers preparations for IE. According to the findings, the majority of participants indicated their desire to have an opportunity to observe and practise within an IE classroom. We argue that one of the major factors which seemed to have affected teacher IE preparation was the lack of opportunity provided for teachers to practise their learned ideas within an inclusive classroom setting. The current situation at FOE is that preservice teachers do not have the privilege to practise their learned ideas within an inclusive education classroom setting. The last time trained teachers practiced their teaching within a special or inclusive education context was more than a decade ago; a time when the diploma in special

education was made available for preservice teachers who specialized for special education. When the program was dismantled in 2014, teachers lost the opportunity to carry out their practice within these settings. The discontinuation of teaching practice within the IE classrooms has greater implications for teacher preparations, and as the study shows, it implies an inadequacy on the part of FOE (NUS) in providing the teachers with the professional training they require. This we argue has further impaired teachers' preparation for an IE classroom- a view that is in line with the literature, (Forlin, Earle, Loreman. & Sharma, 2011) which emphasized the importance of teachers being effectively trained for this will effectively prepare them to efficiently practice within an IE setting.

Findings also indicated a great need for human resource or individuals with the expertise to train teachers especially in the more specialized areas like sign language and braille. In the current state of affairs, there is no specialized trainer within the faculty of education who can effectively use sign language and braille. The lecturers who are currently involved in the teaching of IE, did not receive the requisite training in these very specialized areas thus would normally have difficulty sharing this vital knowledge with teachers. On some occasions and through special arrangements, some guest speakers (from outside the university) with the expertise in sign language or braille would be invited to share their knowledge with trainees through a lecture. Although these individuals are well applauded for sharing their expertise, however there is still a great need to have a full time lecturer onsite with such expertise to work together with teacher trainees within the training institution. One can argue and as confirmed by these findings, that this type of support is crucial for enhancement of educational preparation for teachers in IE. As indicated by Sutherland (2000) lack of expertise to address special needs of students can affect teachers' emotional state which in turn affect their practice. Hence the importance of recruiting experts to support teachers in their preparations cannot be over stated.

Findings also highlighted the notion of support as an important factor for success of IE. This support can be from various individuals such as the trainer with considerable expertise in IE. Similarly the support can come from the school environment in the likes of the teacher aides, experienced teachers and school principals. For example, the concept of using a teacher aide to support the classroom teacher within the classroom was highly recommended by participants in this study. One can very well relate to such sentiments given the challenges such as over crowded classrooms that seem to be the norm in most Samoan classrooms. The ratio of 40 or 50 students to one teacher simply defeats the purpose for inclusive education. Tufue-Dolgoy, (2010) arguing from a similar position, argued that the manner in which inclusive education operates in Samoa seemed to have led to more exclusion for a number of students i.e., the idea of effectively including a student with a special need in a classroom with a high teacher student ration is very unrealistic. Therefore having an extra teacher in this type of context would be the most sensible action to take. The idea of using teacher aides to support IE was initiated by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with one inclusive service provider which clearly indicates government support towards IE. The service provider provides teacher aides to support students with special needs within some regular classrooms. The support of parents of the child with special needs has also been seen as vital in the sense that they can be allowed in the classroom to support the child while the teacher focuses on other students.

Findings also stressed that attitude of teachers, classroom learners and the community can affect IE either in a positive or negative manner. The majority of teachers in this study are novice and they claimed having very limited knowledge of IE which seemed to have affected their sense of confidence in practicing IE. They claimed that having sufficient information will help them develop a better understanding of IE. This findings is consistent with years of research indicating that limited teacher preparation led to teachers feelings of trepidation to practice in an

IE classroom (Chhabra, Srivastava, & Srivastava (2010). Success of IE can also be affected by attitude of classroom learners i.e. if children without special needs are not accepting of their peers with special needs then IE would suffer. The attitude of parents was also deemed important for IE success as several participants indicated that some parents have an adverse attitude towards including a child with a special needs together with their children in the same classroom. This type of attitude is not healthy for IE hence it is important to educate parents so they will develop a better understanding of IE; as education can effect change. In this light, some participants highlighted the idea of an effective school principal in influencing attitude which seems to suggest the principal as an ideal person to organize parents' and teachers' meetings to address the attitude issue.

As has been argued throughout the paper, the limited number of IE courses that are currently available for teachers may not be sufficient to prepare them for IE. The findings seemed to have affirmed this assumption. We maintain that teachers are far from being prepared for an IE classroom hence we strongly suggest that the training institution (FOE) acknowledges the importance of developing an IE program so teachers are adequately prepared to teach in an IE classroom. The literature in relation to professional development of teachers (Avramidis, Bayliss, Burden, 2000 & Avramidis & Kalyva, 2007) stressed the value of developing relevant courses and seminars for it helps reduces teacher stress and any opposed attitude to IE.

XIV. CONCLUSION

Despite some progress made in IE since its inception in the Samoan context in the early twenty first century, a lot of challenges are still evident in several ways. One such problem lies in the preparation of teachers in IE as noted in the findings of the current study. Findings indicated that the training institution is not adequately preparing teachers for an IE classroom. This is clearly evident in the lack of an IE program that is made available for teachers. The one IE introductory course that is currently made

accessible to teachers although seemingly relevant, however is far from adequate in meeting the teachers' needs. The majority of participants in the current study exhibited a great interest in IE unfortunately they claimed not having sufficient knowledge and skills to confidently practise in an IE classroom. It appears that this limited knowledge due to poor teacher preparation has affected teachers motivation and confidence to teach within IE environment. We can argue that this lack of knowledge could have also been exacerbated by the unavailability of a fulltime expert in sign language and braille to further support teachers in their preparation. Moreover is the issue of attitude which has been an ongoing obstacle for success of IE. We have reason to argue that perhaps issues noted above could have stemmed from an adverse attitude towards IE. For example, a lack of IE program could be attributed to an unfavorable attitude towards IE i.e., if policy makers and the training institution value IE, then this attitude would be reflected by the availability of an IE program for teachers. It is highly likely that the same unfavorable attitude could have been instrumental in decisions to eliminate special education courses that were initially offered for teachers as mentioned at the outset. These issues suggest implications for the training institution and teacher preparation programs as will be noted in recommendations below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations are worth consideration which include the following:

- The training institution must acknowledge the importance of recruiting specialized persons to support IE otherwise it will be just theorization which is very unrealistic
- It is crucial for the training institution to acknowledge the value of all education programs and give all equal consideration. IE has suffered many challenges due to individuals seemingly indifferent attitude towards IE
- The majority of policy makers, IE stakeholders and teacher trainers do not seem to have an understanding of the IE concept hence is vital

for these individuals to have a clear conception of IE.

REFERENCES

1. Alieto, E. (2018). Language shift from English to Mother Tongue: Exploring language attitude and willingness to teach among pre-service teachers. *TESOL International Journal*, 13(3), 134-146. 7.
2. Avramidis, E.; Bayliss, P.; Burden, R. (2000). A Survey into Mainstream Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Ordinary School in one Local Education Authority. *Educ. Psychol.* 20, 191–211.
3. Avramidis, E.; Kalyva, E. (2007). The influence of teaching experience and professional development on Greek teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. *Eur. J. Spéc. Needs Educ.* 22, 367–389.
4. Avramidis, E., & Norwich, B. (2002). Mainstream teachers' attitudes towards inclusion/integration: A review of the literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17(2), 129-147.
5. Bradshaw, L., & Lawrence, M. (2006). Attitudes to and concerns about inclusive education: Bruneian in-service and pre-service teachers. *International Journal of Special Education*, 21(1), 35-41.
6. Brennan, B. (2002). A secondary college principal's perspective on student safety, security and success. In D. Stewart (Ed.). *Legal risk management, safety security and success in education*. Proceedings of the 11th annual conference of the Australia and New Zealand Education Law Association, Brisbane, 47 – 56.
7. Campbell, J., Gilmore, L., & Cuskelly, M. (2003). Changing student teachers' attitudes towards disability and inclusion. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disability*.
8. Chhabra, S., Srivastava, R., & Srivastava, I. (2010). Inclusive education in Botswana: The perception of school teachers. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 20, 219–228.
9. Browder, D. M., Trela, K., Courtade, G. R., Jimenez, B. A., Knight. V., & Flowers, C.

(2012). Teaching mathematics and science standards to students with moderate and severe developmental disabilities. *Journal of Special Education*, 46(1), 26-35.doi: 10.1177/0022466910369942.

10. Courtade, G., Spooner, F., Browder, D., & Jimenez, B. (2012). Seven reasons to promote standards-based instruction for students with severe disabilities: A reply to Ayres, Lowrey, Douglas, & Sievers (2011). *Education and Training in Autism and Development Disabilities*, 47(1), 3-13.

11. Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

12. Forlin, C. (2003). Pre-service teacher education: Involvement of students with intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Learning*. 10, 317-326.

13. Forlin, C. (2004). Promoting inclusivity in Western Australian Schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(2), 183-200.

14. Forlin, C. (Ed.). (2010). Teacher Education for Inclusion: Changing Paradigms and Innovative Approaches (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203850879>.

15. Forlin, C.; Earle, C.; Loreman, T.; Sharma, U. (2011). The Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns about Inclusive Education Revised (SACIE-R) Scale for Measuring Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions about Inclusion. *Except. Educ. Int.* 21, 50-65.

16. Forlin, C., Jobling, A., & Caroll, A. (2001). Preservice teachers' discomfort levels toward people with disabilities. *The Journal of International Special Needs Education*, 4, 32-38.

17. Fyssa, A.; Vlachou, A.; Avramidis, E. (2014). Early childhood teachers' understanding of inclusive education and associated practices: Reflections from Greece. *Int. J. Early Years Educ.* 22, 223-237.

18. Government of Samoa. (2006). Strategic Policies and Plan July 2006-June 2015. Apia, Samoa: Office of the Minister of Education Sports and Culture of Samoa.

19. Harris, R. & Stephenson, J. (2003). Inclusion of students with severe intellectual disability in Italy. *Special Education Perspectives*, 12, 65 - 70.

20. Hastings, R.P.; Oakford, S. (2003). Student Teachers' Attitudes towards the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs. *Educ. Psychol.* 23, 87-94.

21. Idol, L. (1997). Key questions related to building collaborative and inclusive schools. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 30(4), 384-394.

22. Jahnukainen, M., & Korhonen, A. (2003). Integration of students with severe and profound intellectual disabilities into the comprehensive school system: Teachers' perceptions of the education reform in Finland. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 50, 169-180.

23. Jenkins, H. J. (2002). A continuum based approach to inclusive policy and practice in regular schools. *Special Education Perspectives*, 11, 56 - 71.

24. Kisanji, J. (1999, March). *Historical and theoretical basis of inclusive education*. Keynote address for the workshop on inclusive education in Namibia; The challenge for teacher education. Khomasdal, Windhoek, Namibia.

25. Loreman, T. (2002). *Teacher Education and Inclusion*. Paper presented at the XIIIth World Congress of Inclusion International , Melbourne, Australia.

26. Lifshitz, H.; Glaubman, R.; Issawi, R. (2004). Attitudes towards inclusion: The case of Israeli and Palestinian regular and special education teachers. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* 19, 171-190.

27. Pappas, M.A.; Papoutsi, C.; Drigas, A. (2018). Policies, Practices, and Attitudes toward Inclusive Education: The Case of Greece. *Soc. Sci.* 7, 90.

28. Rakap, S.; Kaczmarek, L. (2010). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in Turkey. *Eur. J. Spec. Needs Educ.* 25, 59-75.

29. Salend, S. (1984). Factors contributing to the development of successful mainstreaming programs, *Exceptional Children*, 50, 409-419.

30. Sharma, U., Forlin, C., Loreman, T., & Earle, C. (2006). Preservice teachers' attitudes, concerns and sentiments about inclusive

education: an international comparison of novice pre-service teachers. *International Journal of Special Education*, 21(2), 80-93.

31. Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/inclusion, 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children*, 63, (1) 59-75.

32. Subban, P., & Sharma, U. (2006). Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in Victoria, Australia. *International Journal of Special Education*, 21(1), 42-52.

33. Sutherland, M. (2000). Why are students failing? Is mainstreaming the cause? Proceedings of the Western Australian Institute for Educational Research Forum. Retrieved. November 2005 from <http://education.curtin.edu.au/waier/forums/2000/Sutherland.html>.

34. Tufue-Dolgov, R. (2010). Stakeholders' perspective of the implementation of the inclusive education policy in Samoa: a cultural fit. PhD thesis. Victoria University, NZ. (11) (PDF) *Physical Education and Inclusive Education in Samoa: Challenges from Policy to Practice*. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353807701_Physical_Education_and_Inclusive_Education_in_Samoa_Challenges_from_Policy_to_Practice [accessed Jun 15 2023].

35. Vaughn, S., Schumm, J., Jallad, B., Slusher, J., & Saumell, L. (1996). Teachers' views of inclusion. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 11(2), 96-106.

36. Watson, J. (2004). *Teachers' talk: Perceptions of Queensland secondary teachers about students with learning difficulties*. <http://www.aare.edu.au/04pap/cra04084.pdf>.

37. Westwood, P. S. (2003). *Commonsense methods for children with special educational needs: Strategies for the regular classroom* (4th ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.