iafor

journal of education inclusive education

Volume 9 – Issue 1 – 2021

Editor: Tamsin Hinton-Smith

Editor-in-Chief: Yvonne Masters

ISSN: 2187-0594

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IAFOR Journal of Education: Inclusive Education
Volume 9 – Issue 1 – 2021

IAFOR Publications

The International Academic Forum

IAFOR Journal of Education: Inclusive Education

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Published by The International Academic Forum (IAFOR), Japan
IAFOR Publications, Sakae 1-16-26-201, Naka-ward, Aichi, Japan 460-0008

Executive Editor: Joseph Haldane
Publications Manager: Nick Potts

IAFOR Journal of Education: Inclusive Education
Volume 9 – Issue 1 – 2021

Published February, 2021

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ISSN: 2187-0594

ije.iafor.org

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Edited by Tamsin Hinton-Smith

Associate Editors: Leda Kamenopoulou & Pearl Subban

Foreword
(Musings from the Editor-in-Chief)

Inclusive Education is our first issue for 2021. The issue's editorial team have worked hard, in difficult global conditions, to work with reviewers and authors to bring this issue to publication. Many thanks go to the editor, Tamsin Hinton-Smith, and her two Associate Editors, Leda Kamenopoulou and Pearl Subban.

When we first settled on the timing of this issue (late 2019) little did we know that our first *Inclusive Education* issue would be published with the world gripped by a pandemic that has lasted more than 12 months. Prior to 2020, thinking global was a catch cry, now countries are becoming more and more insular as borders close, and thus more exclusive than inclusive. Education has also been challenged and being inclusive while teaching online has proved to be a big issue for many. Online learning necessitates computers and internet access. For some, this is not a reality of their lives. Also, with students separated by distance, how do we include all? Inclusive education, for the young and not so young, has never been more important.

Diane Richler, Inclusion International, stated:

> *Inclusion is not a strategy to help people fit into the systems and structures which exist in our societies; it is about transforming those systems and structures to make it better for everyone. Inclusion is about creating a better world for everyone.*

Inclusive education is not just for educational institutions, it has to be for the world! We need to include all regardless of ethnicity, colour, gender, sexual preference, religion, age … and the list could go on. Everyone needs to be included and acknowledged for who they are. We don't yet have this. Perhaps the last thought should be that of Ajaypal Singh Banga:

> *We have the Internet of Everything but not the inclusion of everyone.*

My thanks, as always, to the authors, the editor, the associate editors, the publications manager, Nick Potts, and to all the reviewers for bringing this issue to you, the readers.

Enjoy,
Yvonne Masters,
Editor-in-Chief

Editorial Advice

Preparing a submission to the *IAFOR Journal of Education* is more than writing about your research study: it involves paying careful attention to our submission requirements. Different journals have different requirements in terms of format, structure and referencing style, among other things. There are also some common expectations between all journals such as the use of good academic language and lack of plagiarism. To assist you in reaching the review stage for this or any other peer-reviewed journal, we provide the following advice which you should check carefully and ensure that you adhere to.

1. Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a practice that is not acceptable in any journal. Avoiding plagiarism is the cardinal rule of academic integrity because plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is presenting someone else's work as your own. The *IAFOR Journal of Education* immediately rejects any submission with evidence of plagiarism.

There are three common forms of plagiarism, none of which are acceptable:

1. ***Plagiarism with no referencing***. This is copying the words from another source (article, book, website, etc.) without any form of referencing.
2. ***Plagiarism with incorrect referencing***. This involves using the words from another source and only putting the name of the author and/or date as a reference. Whilst not as grave as the plagiarism just mentioned, it is still not acceptable academic practice. Direct quoting requires quotation marks and a page number in the reference. This is best avoided by paraphrasing rather than copying.
3. ***Self-plagiarism***. It is not acceptable academic practice to use material that you have already had published (which includes in conference proceedings) in a new submission. You should not use your previously published words and you should not submit about the same data unless it is used in a completely new way.

2. Meeting the Journal Aims and Scope

Different journals have different aims and scope, and papers submitted should fit the specific journal. A "scattergun" approach (where you submit anywhere in the hope of being published) is not sound practice. Like in darts, your article needs to hit the journal's "bullseye", it needs to fit within the journal's interest area. For example, a submission that is about building bridges, will not be acceptable in a journal dedicated to education. Ensure that your paper is clearly about education.

3. Follow the Author Guidelines

Most journals will supply a template to be followed for formatting your paper. Often, there will also be a list of style requirements on the website (font, word length, title length, page layout, and referencing style, among other things). There may also be suggestions about the preferred structure of the paper. For the *IAFOR Journal of Education* these can all be found here:
https://iafor.org/journal/iafor-journal-of-education/author-guidelines/

4. Use Academic Language

The *IAFOR Journal of Education* only accepts papers written in correct and fluent English at a high academic standard. Any use of another language (whether in the paper or the reference list) requires the inclusion of an English translation.

The style of expression must serve to articulate the complex ideas and concepts being presented, conveying explicit, coherent, unambiguous meaning to scholarly readers. Moreover, manuscripts must have a formal tone and quality, employing third-person rather than first-person standpoint (when feasible), placing emphasis on the research and not on unsubstantiated subjective impressions.

Contributors whose command of English is not at the level outlined above are responsible for having their manuscript corrected by a native-level, English-speaking academic prior to submitting their paper for publication.

5. Literature Reviews

Any paper should have reference to the corpus of **scholarly** literature on the topic. A review of the literature should:

- Predominantly be about contemporary literature (the last 5 years) unless you are discussing a seminal piece of work.
- Make explicit international connections for relevant ideas.
- Analyse published papers in the related field rather than describe them.
- Outline the gaps in the literature.
- Highlight your contribution to the field.

Referencing

Referencing is the main way to avoid allegations of plagiarism. The *IAFOR Journal of Education* uses the APA referencing style for both in-text citations and the reference list. If you are unsure of the correct use of APA please use the Purdue Online Writing Lab (Purdue OWL), – https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/ – which has excellent examples of all forms of APA referencing. Please note APA is used for referencing not for the general format of the paper. Your reference list should be alphabetical by author surname and include DOIs whenever possible.

This short guide to getting published should assist you to move beyond the first editorial review. Failure to follow the guidelines will result in your paper being immediately rejected.

Good luck in your publishing endeavours,

Dr Yvonne Masters
Editor-in-Chief, *IAFOR Journal of Education*

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From the Editor

Welcome to the *IAFOR Journal of Education: Inclusive Education.* What a journey it has been. It has been an immense privilege to work with a team of international colleagues so committed to increasing the inclusivity of educational opportunities, experiences and outcomes within their diverse contexts. This issue would not have been possible without all of the wonderful contributions from submitting authors, the expertise of our team of international reviewers, and the editorial teams for the issue and wider IAFOR journal. When we got together as an editorial team for this issue, one of our priorities was that this special issue should live up to the values of its focus. We know that minority world researchers are under-represented in international journal authorship and we did not want that to happen here. We are overjoyed to have worked on bringing this collection with researchers and research contexts including Cyprus, Germany, Malawi, Malaysia, Malta, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Spain.

The field of inclusive education encompasses a vast spread of issues and experiences globally, as testified by the array of submissions we have received for this issue. This issue addresses the inclusivity of pedagogic and curricula practices in learning contexts from mainstream and special needs from nursery through to secondary education, to university students and employability. Articles explore the inclusivity of education experiences for diverse groups that include foreign language learners; adolescent mothers; and autistic spectrum learners. Authors draw on insights from diverse intentional theorists of the social role of education, from Freire, to Bourdieu. Articles explore themes and problematise concepts including multicultural education, democracy, equality, justice, citizenship, meritocracy, human capital, inclusion as corporate social responsibility, and the potential of robotics to further special needs inclusion. Experiences of educators and educated are explored through multiple quantitative and qualitative research approaches from cross-national quantitative analysis across 52 countries, through to in-depth case study and narrative approaches utilising teacher and learner surveys, interviews, and classroom observation.

Corporate social responsibility programs are examined through a case study approach by Azhar and Azman in their article, "School's Perspectives on Educational Programmes under Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives. Case Study: Malaysia." The article explores both the benefits and the challenges from a school's perspective, and from the perspective of students from at-risk backgrounds.

Steve Entrich's "Understanding Cross-National Differences in Inclusive Education Coverage: An Empirical Analysis" analyses cross-national differences in inclusive education approaches in over 50 societies. His research identifies the extent to which educational inclusion in different national education systems is affected by the definition of special educational needs (SEN) in each national context.

Ryan Gatbonton's "Educational Experiences of Adolescent Mothers while Studying College in the Philippines" uses reflective journals to develop understanding around vulnerabilities, potential and determination in the lived experiences of this group of learners, as they navigate educational journeys amongst new parenting responsibilities, social stigma, and further challenges such as domestic abuse.

"Students call me 'Arap' which means slave in Turkish language" – Chinaza Solomon Ironsi identifies inequalities that include around workload, promotional opportunities, and respect from students; in his research on experiences of "African immigrant teachers teaching young EFL learners: A racial discrimination study."

Contemporary research often considers the use of robotics in enhancing social skills among children with autism spectrum disorder. This approach is the focus of "Exploring the potential of robotics in supporting children with autism spectrum disorder" within the context of the Philippines. Mostajo, Legaspe, Camarse, and Salva have utilized a systematic literature review to identify significant studies in this field.

In "Exploring Implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines in Private Secondary Schools," Mbewe, Kamchedzera and Kunkwenzu focus on the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines (NSNEPG) in Malawi that was first implemented in 2009. They use a phenomenological methodology, identifying a lack of knowledge, resources and insufficient support for learners with SEN. They stress that communication with school stakeholders is key for the effective implementation of the policy guidelines in this context.

In, "Engaging, affirming, and nurturing inclusive environment: A grounded theory study in the Philippine context," by Raguidin, Custodio and Bulusan, the authors set out to develop a contemporary framework which will enhance understanding regarding inclusive environments within the Philippine setting.

In "Employability and Inclusion of Non-traditional University Students: Limitations and Challenges," Maria Tenorio-Rodriguez explores experiences and impact of inequalities in opportunities to develop employability skills in Spain, identifying the tension between neoliberal and transformative agendas for higher education.

Jacqueline Zammit's "Maltese Educators' Perceptions and Good Practice in Multicultural Education" takes a qualitative case study approach to exploring Maltese teachers' understandings around taking a multicultural approach to teaching Maltese as a second language to learners from immigrant backgrounds. This is a relatively new space as teaching Maltese as a second language has only emerged as a significant area in recent years.

Now more than ever, there is an imperative that we, as an international community of education experts, remain attuned to the impact on inclusivity of our ever-changing circumstances, and opportunities to maximise the equity of participation opportunities. The global pandemic has forced sweeping changes to education experiences that have posed both challenges and opportunities for inclusivity. These range from the challenges of effectively creating inclusive learner engagement and communities online; through to the impact of technology access inequalities; and the challenge of ensuring that the most socially precarious have adequate food, heat and physical space to learn effectively from home, and how bringing the online classroom into the home may expose inequalities in living conditions.

It is our hope that the contributions here will spark reflection, debate, further research and developments to practice for fellow educators around the world. We hope you will enjoy this and find it as valuable as we have.

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Article 1: School's Perspectives on Educational Programmes under Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives. Case Study: Malaysia

Dr Athirah Azhar received her PhD in Social Work (2018) and Masters in Social Work (2013) from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). During her doctoral study, she became an exchange student under Erasmus funding, in the Department of Asian and African Studies, Humboldt University Berlin. She is now attached with Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) as a lecturer in the Social Work Programme and is currently Social Work Programme Coordinator. Prior to joining UNIMAS and her postgraduate studies, she spent seven years organising reaching out programmes for children and communities in rural areas. Her research interests include child and adolescent development, CSR and social work program evaluation.
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Professor Azlinda Azman is the first Social Work Professor in Malaysia. She was among the few selected and awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree in Clinical Social Work in New York University. She chairs the National Joint Council Committee on Social Work Education Malaysia, is an Executive Committee Member of the Malaysian Association of Social Workers (MASW), and an Assistant Honorary Secretary of the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC). She is actively involved internationally in advocating for social work education and practice. She is also the Convenor of the AIDS Action and Research Group (AARG), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). For her contribution in rehabilitation of inmates in the country, she was awarded *Pingat Bakti Setia* by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Malaysia. Her research interests include, social work education and practice, HIV and AIDS, psychosocial assessment and clinical social work.
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Article 9: Maltese Educators' Perceptions and Good Practice in Multicultural Education

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School's Perspectives on Educational Programmes under Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives. Case Study: Malaysia

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Abstract

This study explores the impacts of the Corporate Social Responsibility educational programme from the schools' perspectives towards their pupils and school. A qualitative approach was chosen from a case study of these programmes conducted in Malaysia. The method used for data collection was semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling was adopted to collect data from headmasters/mistresses from 10 primary schools and was analysed using narrative analysis. Findings shows that these programmes have impacted pupils through educational exposure, a holistic approach, academic improvement, feeling motivated, encouraging creativity and assisting in pupils' future career development. One of the impacts that were related to the educational programmes was the teaching and learning knowledge that was gained by the teachers. Other than that, the educational programmes also eased the financial burden of the school as well as providing benefits to the surrounding community. Schools suggested that the programmes should be improved by creating better and more programme type content, being more academically focused, allocating more funding, being conducted over a longer period for sustainability, and conducting the programme more regularly. Corporate Social Responsibility educational programmes in future are suggested to be academic related which should include an English language programme, information technology, 21st century learning, a green programme, basic skills (read, write, count), a motivational programme, and a study visit. In conclusion, CSR educational programmes initiatives must be sustainable because it had great impact on pupils, teachers, schools, and the community surrounding the school.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, CSR initiatives, educational programme, education, school, social work

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is social obligation of business organisations towards wider society and local community (Sinha & Chaudhari, 2018) Corporate companies have the awareness in giving back to the community through their CSR initiatives. Besides, each of the companies have their own niche areas in implementing CSR particularly based on the products supplied and service provided. Corporate companies need to see that becoming involved in CSR, particularly education, is not just a one-off donation, providing scholarship or internship for the students, but goes beyond that.

According to Banks et al. (2016), it is crucial to surpass materialistic flows that establishes a connection between the community and companies by gaining the community's perspective on CSR. Corporate companies need to get involved in implementing CSR programmes to provide a better impact to community. Nodoushani et al. (2014) added that education investments are one positive way to give back to the communities which are consequently connected with employees having better health. One of the beneficial investments in education is by implementing CSR educational programmes in school. Why educational programmes in school? School will be the best place to inspire children so that children can see the upside of going to school. This is the case particularly for children in rural areas, who did not have a chance to finish high school as they could not see the purpose of going back there. The top CSR practice in Malaysia is education which focuses on scholarship and internship (Ismail et al., 2015). Types of CSR in Malaysia ranged from school infrastructure, such as computer labs, to the provision of the learning materials for students, as well as professional development for teacher s. Therefore, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the impacts of CSR educational programmes on pupils?
2. What are the impacts of CSR educational programmes on schools?
3. What are the suggestions from schools for future CSR educational programmes?

Previous studies on CSR have concentrated more on the corporate side. This study is focusing on CSR from the perspectives of stakeholders which are the schools. This study also makes novel contributions on CSR from the community perspectives. CSR educational programmes have been organised by the corporate companies and it has given a great impact to schools. Ismail et al. (2013) stated that educational programmes in CSR has indeed acted as a medium for nurturing knowledge outside the classroom due to its multi-dimensionality in practice involving fields such as information and communications technology (ICT), the environment, languages, and life sciences. Besides that, Ismail et al. (2015) suggested future research should occur on CSR programmes in schools, and to also consider looking at the impact of CSR in schools.

This paper highlights the impacts of CSR educational programmes from the schools' perspectives towards their pupils and schools. Findings are organised by recording the perspectives from headmasters / headmistresses (HM) and teachers who had been involved in CSR educational programmes in their schools. Recommendations from these perspectives are also presented which might be useful for both the schools and corporate companies. Corporate and school ties or public and private partnerships, will be beneficial as rural schools are not able get any other resources in their area. In fact, the impact needs to be highlighted so that the programme could be implemented on a long-term basis to benefit all children enrolled in that particular rural school every year. Investing in future education is important for the long-term sustainability of a company and the economy (Nodoushani et al., 2014).

Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility Contributions in School

Businesses lack a relationship with the school's children and this has been detailed in international affairs and academic analysis (Collins, 2014). In fact, according to Collins (2014), businesses are stated to provide influences that are positive to children. This is achieved by providing access to education, and rest and play. In addition, it also supports parents, ensures the product's safety and supports environment stewardship. The nature of CSR activities delivered to schools depends on the type of business they are operating. This is logical because through CSR programmes, a specialist from the companies transfers the core knowledge and technologies with the purpose of benefitting the school (Ismail et al., 2013). These CSR programmes have shown that the students who took part in it were able to read, did well in arithmetic, and engaged in discussion after they participated in said programmes (Sinha & Chaudhari, 2018). This would really help in providing exposure to children, especially the ones in rural or underserved areas.

O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) added that family's involvement programmes, reading programmes and parent-teacher collaboration programmes were positively predictive of academic improvement for both elementary and secondary students. Building partnership with private sectors here are important. Moreover, "the surrounding communities, teachers, administrators and government officials are accountable for the inclusion of all children through formal institutional mechanisms, community members become more interested in school improvement and more willing to commit their own resources to the task" (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2009, p.16). However, though it involves many outsiders, the programme has to be suitable to the children in that school area. O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) stated that in partnership with community-based organisations, programmes should be culturally appropriate within the community. Educational programmes such as an environmental programme can lead to positive changes in student knowledge awareness, skills, attentions, intentions and behaviour (Stern et al., 2014). Also, through CSR, corporate companies have developed a school computer lab which has made the school environment more conducive to students (Ismail et al., 2013). Ismail et al. (2013) also added that teachers have gained hands-on skills relating to computers and students' positive changes were also felt by teachers. In addition, there was also a wide range in student achievements in examinations and in co-curricular activities involving soft skills, plus CSR programs in school have multiplied the effects on the students, teachers and society (Ismail et al., 2013).

Inclusivity in Education

Inclusive education is a "core element of teacher preparation, continuing professional learning, and a domain within education policymaking and practice" (Slee, 2020, p.5). It is also stated in a fourth core of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). "Inclusion involves improving inputs, processes and environments to foster learning both at the level of the learner in his or her learning environment and the system level to support the entire learning experience" (UNESCO, 2009, p.7). Inclusivity discussed here is not the inclusivity of the children, but the inclusivity of the education for children. As mentioned by UNESCO (2009), there are three justifications which are educational justification, social justification and economic justification. The educational justification requirement is to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and that therefore benefit all children (UNESCO, 2009). Unfortunately, most of us consider inclusivity as social justification.

In ensuring children get the best education, it should be inclusive not only in terms of the learning process, but the place should also be taken into account, and not just by the teachers, but also by the surrounding community. More can be done in a creative way and one course of action is by conducting more educational programmes which involve collaboration from diverse stakeholders. Ballantine et al. (2017, p.29) suggested an open systems model that can help to conceptualise a whole system in addition to understanding which pieces would fit or do not fit together. Inclusive education could not be achieved if the school is not willing to include individuals or groups from a diverse background with diverse learning styles. With varieties of learning, an educational programme could also be included as part of inclusive education. Myriad educational programmes can be organised in school and one is through Game Based Learning (GBL). According to Trajkovik et al. (2018), collaborative environment in traditional games through GBL can increase motivation in introvert children for the extrovert measure influence. When traditional games were used as an instructional tool, it enhanced students' learning to use available technology to search more information on the traditional games which subsequently acts as an intrinsic motivational factor (Trajkovik et al., 2018). Ranieri and Bruni (2013) stated that students who were not responsive in class but started talking, showed collaborative attitudes and engagement when given mobile phones.

GBL is not just an educational programme but it encompasses a variety of programmes and activities that can be conducted in school by engaging with individual or agencies outside schools. Therefore, school curricular should be interdisciplinary, represent diverse interests and enhances critical thinking skills that could assist children in reaching their common goal via a different path (Ballantine et al., 2017; p.29). In fact, with participation from the adults such as the surrounding community and parents, educational programmes in school would be thrilling. Adams et al. (2016) said that, inclusivity, is the process of collaboration of the people and educational programmes which the source of strength is to accomplish a singular goal. These could not be accomplished by managing individually (Adams et al., 2016). Supposedly, not looking at the child as the problem but to identify that the education system is the problem (UNESCO, 2009)

Programme Theory

This research adopts 'programme theory' as it has been used by evaluators to develop the best outcome to a programme (Rogers et al., 2000). Programme theory describes programme content, predicts the end result of the programme, specifies what needs to be done based on the aim of the programme, and outcomes of the programmes by domain (Reynolds, 1998; Sidani, 1999). The relevance of the theory to this study is that it evaluates CSR educational programmes. The evaluation is from corporate companies' perspectives. It is wide-ranging to conceptualise and evaluate the programme that covers all the factors. Furthermore, Rogers et al. (2000) added that it is impossible to design an evaluation that covers all the identified factors in programme theory. In these research findings, it describes school's perspective on CSR educational programmes towards pupils and schools.

Methods

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research approach and selected a case study of the Adopt-a-School (AASC) Programme as it was conducted in most of the rural primary schools throughout Malaysia. The AASC Programme involves corporate companies and government-link-companies (GLC) that work together to adopt a school in the rural areas for the period of three years. Once this period ends, the company will then leave to adopt other rural schools.

Sampling

The CSR educational programmes are conducted throughout Malaysia but only 10 schools were selected as samples for this study. These schools are from three different states in the northern region: Kedah, Pulau Pinang and Perak. Purposive sampling was used where interviewed schools have completed three years of adoption with a corporate company under CSR educational programmes initiatives. During the adoption, the corporate companies have organised varieties of CSR educational programmes based on the school needs. The interviewees included headmasters/mistresses (HM) and some of them were accompanied by teachers who acted as programme coordinators when the CSR educational programme in the school took place.

Data Collection

The technique of data collection was semi-structured interviews while the research instrument used was a questionnaire. The interview questions were nine open-ended questions comprised of three sections, which were the educational programme, pupils and school. It was conducted in the Malaysian language. With the consent of the HM, the interview was recorded.

The interviews were transcribed and translated into English. Each of the interviews took between 40 and 45 minutes maximum. More than 50% of the questions were derived from (Wall & Sage Solutions, 2014) that has guided the suitable questions for summative evaluation to ensure the validity and reliability of the questions. Refer to Table 1 below, questions that have been ticked (/) were used as the interview questions.

Table 1: Summative Evaluation Questions after the Educational Programme has been Completed

	Schools
• What did the programme accomplish?	/
• Did the program reach its goals and objectives?	
• What impact did the program have on its recipients?	/
• What were the outcomes?	/
• Who benefited the programme?	/
• How much was the benefit?	
• Was the benefit greater with this program as compared with another programme?	
• Did all the types of students or clients benefit from the programme?	/
• What were the positive outcomes?	/
• What were the negative outcomes?	/
• What should be improved or changed in the programme?	/
• Does the benefit of the programme warrant the cost?	

Source: (Wall & Sage Solutions, 2014)

Data Analysis

Narrative analysis was used for case study as a method for "describing and critiquing different positions present in narratives" (White & Taket, 2000; p. 702). The researcher needs to decide which stories provided answers to the research objectives rather than provide everything participants conveyed (Wong & Breheny, 2018).

Ethics
Ethical clearance was ensured through an approval from Ministry of Education Malaysia and State Education Department as the samples were HM from schools. Before the interview started, interviewees were informed that the interview will be recorded. The school name was not stated but only stated as Respondent.

Findings

This section presents the findings from respondent about their perspective on CSR educational programmes in the rural school. There were three questions related to CSR educational programmes.

Question 1: What are the impacts of CSR educational programmes towards the pupils?
From the interviews conducted with 10 respondents, 90% said that the CSR educational programme has benefitted the pupils in their school. A respondent said that it has given exposure and helped pupils holistically through gaining their self-development, hobby and future jobs. Pupils were exposed to robotic programmes which have brought them up to the robotic national level competition. According to a respondent, pupils who could not do well in academics were taught about a computer's technical side such as how to mantle and dismantle the computers CPU. As for other pupils, they were taught the basic software such as Microsoft Office. Pupils were also exposed to the quizzes in computer programmes. Another respondent stated that if no outsiders came to their school, especially corporate companies, schools would not be able to organise all sorts of educational programmes for their pupils. With so much exposure from CSR educational programmes, it has allowed pupils to have a much better attitude.

A respondent stated that by bringing outsiders to the school, pupils had benefitted through motivational talks as well as on better learning methods. In fact, a respondent said that pupils were motivated, thrilled and excited to come to school upon hearing about the CSR educational programmes organised in their school. This would help pupils who are always absent from school to come back to school to join the programme. A respondent added that CSR educational programmes have given benefits towards school achievement, pupils understand better about green environment, encourage creativity and helped pupils in their career development. Respondent 5 said about how the educational programme benefitted participating pupils:

> *Good. Because pupils here lack exposure. When it comes to the programme the students get excited and thrilled. Games or whatever right. We want to make the pupils excited and happy to come to school to learn. Have to give something to motivate them to come to school as here also a lot of pupils always absent"* (Respondent 5).

A respondent suggested that CSR educational programmes ought to include more programmes that are related to computers and technology to attract the pupil to learn: For example, by having computers in each of the classrooms. With the addition of a projector and screen, this will benefit pupils during the learning process. A respondent stated that pupils need motivational programmes such as talks and academic additional classes before they sit for Primary School Achievement Test (PSAT). Other than that, a respondent added that pupils need study visit programmes so that they would have more of an open mind. One of the study trips suggested is a historical visit. Pupil would learn more and understand better by visiting the historical places, besides, they themselves would search for more information on their own

initiative to get further information. This would also help pupils in their essay writing. A respondent also mentioned out-of-class learning such as camping or during science subjects, where a teacher would bring pupils out from class, but still in the school compound, to learn about plants and trees. Other suggestions on suitable CSR educational programmes for pupils are 21st century classes, exam-focus for PSAT pupils, and green programmes.

Question 2: What are the impacts of CSR educational programmes towards the schools?
Teachers were sent for courses to update their knowledge and teaching methods. CSR educational programmes did not just benefit pupils and teachers but also parents and the community surrounding the school. According to a respondent, corporate companies did conduct computer classes for the community. Parents and the surrounding community have given their full support in all CSR educational programmes conducted in school by attending programmes conducted by corporate companies and sending their children to school for participation at any time. When their children attended school during a weekend, the whole community got together to cook and prepare food for everyone from the budget allocated for the programmes.

From all ten respondents who were interviewed, six respondents stated that CSR educational programmes provided were insufficient. A respondent was surprised that pupils who did not do well in class could express themselves very well in the programme conducted. The activity requires pupils to choose their ambition, which one pupil chose to be a newscaster. A respondent was surprised to see most of the pupils' showed their hidden talent:

> *"If you can see how my students who have low IQ become a newscaster in one of the programmes, with his own style, I was shocked when I saw that. It was a very interesting programme. There are a lot more programmes but the time was too short and we could not let other students experience this"* (Respondent 1).

Despite the insufficient funds, schools could not organise their own educational programme for their pupils. Besides, a respondent stated that in rural areas, the community only depends on school to educate their children. Thus, school also needs support from outsiders to assist schools. Another respondent stated that they fully utilised the resources that they have around them: for example, inviting agencies to school and requesting to use the agency's facility for the pupils' benefit.

> *"From here we can see that we need a good network with private sector and outsiders. If here you can see that we need assistance from the prisoner's department, army, police and government agencies and private for us to produce the student based on what the ministry has requested. For sure we really need contributions from outsiders especially through this programme"* (Respondent 1).

After the CSR educational programme was completed, schools were back to normal and they were not in contact with the companies any longer. Moreover, the school's ranking has dropped down in a year or two after CSR educational programme had completed, as the school could not afford extra intensive classes for their pupils. An interviewed respondent stated that CSR educational programmes should continue as they are really in need of financial assistance, another respondent said they need to let other pupils experience it as well as it has assisted teacher's in teaching. A respondent also added that even from the Parent Teacher Associations

(PTA), it could not provide that much funding because most of the parents who sent their children to school are working in agriculture, selling food in stalls or working in a factory, that do not earn that much. A respondent prefers that corporate companies to continue their CSR educational programmes and do not stop. This is because pupils enrol to school every year and the school would want the new pupils to benefit from the same programmes. Besides, pupils always look forward for CSR educational programmes by corporate companies.

> *"If it's possible, to have it every year because new students comes in every year that means the programme should be continued. We really encourage corporate agencies or government themselves come together and assist the school"* (Respondent 1)

> *"We have already gotten the assistance/programme for 3 years and then suddenly it disappears just like that. At least they still send the motivator that they have sent before once in a while. Meaning that they do not leave the school just like that"* (Respondent 2)

> *"If we can have a programme every month it will be much better. Because children will always look forward for more programmes"* (Respondent 4)

Question 3: What are the suggestions from schools for future CSR educational programmes?

Respondents were asked on future programme suggestions that best suits their pupils. The respondents suggested academic foci such as night tuition and intensive classes. Moreover, intensive classes should be conducted by schools' once examinations are closer. This is because sending children to the paid tuition classes outside would be expensive for their parents and far away in town. There was also a suggestion for the pupils to come to school at night to do their homework with other classmates and discuss homework amongst them. A respondent agreed that by learning from each other, students would understand better.

A respondent stated that it is imperative for CSR educational programmes to provide basic skills for pupils who have learning difficulties such as difficulty to focus on reading, writing and counting. According to a respondent, if there is extra funding, schools would subscribe to one year's worth of educational magazines or buy new books for the benefits of pupils. Indeed, reading projects should be continued so that pupils have an open mind. A respondent also emphasised an English language programme. According to a respondent, English language is one of the main issues in the rural schools. Besides, in the PSAT, it is compulsory for pupils to pass the English language subject. Other than that, a holistic programme is also essential to develop pupils to a high level of knowledge.

> *"For me is to each pupil to be holistic. Whatever the curriculum is depends on the student holistically. Let's say the school performs well, is a great school, famous school, but when the results come out they did not reach the average school grade that is required by the state education department so they didn't get anything. But when we focus on student holistically teachers will help the student individually"* (Respondent 3)

> *"Can I say English language? I want to focus more on the English proficiencies, if you talk about education I really want to focus that first. We really have to put a lot of effort for English language. I could not depend on*

> *just one schedule but the most challenging part was pupil's interest to learn English language. How to make them like/enjoy English language is quite difficult"* (Respondent 7)

The respondent did give some suggestions for the CSR educational programmes for future improvement. According to a respondent, the programme must be suitable for rural schools and the community surrounding them. Moreover, any programmes that will be organised in school should involve at least one whole classroom instead of just 10 pupils from the whole school. This was when there were 10 students selected along with selected teachers to the city of Kuala Lumpur. Other than that, the facilitator that will be involved in the CSR educational programmes should also be among the teachers or university students as they could convey the messages in an easy manner at the pupils' level of understanding. Another respondent emphasised that CSR educational programmes should be offer variety and focus more on academics related subjects. Furthermore, a respondent suggested that it would be good if the companies could focus more on 21st century learning. A respondent also suggested that schools and corporate companies should work together for the sustainability of the programmes in future. Finally, schools' suggestion on future programmes must be academic related which should include an English language programme, information technology, 21st century learning, green programme, basic skills (read, write, count), motivational programme and study visit.

Discussion

This aim of the study was to highlight the impacts of educational CSR programmes from the schools' perspectives towards their pupils and school. CSR educational programmes' flaws and future programmes are also discussed in this section.

Perspective on CSR Educational Programme towards Participated Pupils

From the findings, CSR educational programmes assuredly have provided positive impact to the pupils. It has impacted them through educational exposure, holistic approaches, academic improvement, motivation, encouraging creativity and assisting in pupils' future career development. As stated by Ballantine et al. (2017) school curricular should be interdisciplinary, represent diverse interests and enhance critical thinking skills that could assist children in reaching their common goal. From the findings, one of the pupils who was quiet and did not do well in academics, was very expressive in one of the CSR educational programmes conducted in school. Ranieri and Bruni (2013) stated pupils that did not react when asked orally about themselves started talking and discovering the cell phone's multimedia functionalities when prompted by mobile phones. The new generation indeed preferred the new style of learning in which CSR educational programmes can incorporate. A myriad of styles of learning can be applied in educational programmes under CSR initiatives based on the company's expertise. Ismail et al. (2013) stated that teachers have gained hands-on skills relating computers and students' positive changes also felt by teachers. In addition, there was also a wide range in student achievements in examinations and in co-curricular activities involving soft skills, plus, CSR programmes in school have multiplied the effects on the students, teachers and society (Ismail et al., 2013). Through CSR initiatives, some companies do bring pupils for a study visit and this should be continued to provide another side of learning to pupils. Walan and Gericke (2019) gave examples of out of school activities: learning experience is different from school, topics selected will attract pupils, and high cognitive activities.

Perspective on CSR Educational Programme towards Participated School

"Leaders from a successful rural school have said that to maintain school-wide is to focus on instruction and high expectations; development of multiple support systems for students, and work with teacher's strength to improve students' outcome" (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009, p.15). School should take note that the focus is not just for the pupils but also for the development of the teachers. As Slee (2018, p.5) stated, "inclusive education in school is a core element of teacher preparation, continuing professional learning, and policy making and practice". During CSR educational programmes, some of the teachers were sent for courses on teaching as well as to keep updated on teaching and learning methods. Schools were delighted that corporate companies were willing to reach out to them in the rural areas. Through corporate companies' CSR educational programmes initiatives, extra tuition classes can be conducted to assist pupils that are weak in certain subjects. Everyone was happy when school academic ranking went up during this time. Besides, extra tuition classes are also emphasised for the pupils that will be sitting for PSAT. Sinha & Chaudhari (2018) stated five major impacts on school academic programme in CSR initiatives. The sustainability attributes to the pupils after the programme are, pupils are able to understand and participate in the discussion after the programme, pupils can read a paragraph, pupils can read sentence, pupils can read a story; and pupils can subtract arithmetic numbers (Sinha & Chaudhari, 2018). It is evident that the CSR educational programme initiative in school has helped pupils to improve their academic performance. The surrounding community was supportive and they are willing to send their children anytime to school. Sometimes when the school is running a CSR educational programme for their children during weekend, the rural community also gathered in school to prepare food for everyone using the budget that has been allocated to schools for the programme. This is how we can see that the rural community is very warm and welcoming when conducting programmes for their children. This is supported by O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014) that stated family involvement impact on student achievement, followed by parent-teacher collaboration and communication programmes. More, Adams et al., (2016) stated that collaboration is important to accomplish goals in educational programmes.

CSR Educational Programmes Challenges

The CSR educational programmes conducted were not consistent and occurred for only a certain period of time or just as a one-off. It would be wiser for pupils to be enrolled in the program every year, so that they can gain continued benefit, especially in the rural areas. It is true as Collins (2014) said that the relationship between businesses and children are still lacking. Child rights are significant to businesses and offer an opportunity to improve business efforts in relation to sustainability, ethics, CSR and societal progress generally (Collins, 2014). If the corporate sees the importance of education for all children, corporate will encourage more and other corporates to carry out CSR educational programmes in rural school. There should have a continuity of the CSR educational programmes. Even though rural schools fully utilise the resources surrounding them, few resources can be found in their areas. Rural school need corporate companies' continuous support. In the SDG fourth core, it is also stated that all stakeholders including a business can leverage their resources and core competencies to support governments in delivering on their promise of education for all (UNESCO, 2009).

Future Suggestions for CSR Educational Programmes in School

From the findings, all respondents stated that CSR educational programmes in school should be continued. Finally, the schools' suggestion on future programmes must be academic related which should include English language programme, ICT, 21st century learning, green programme, basic skills (read, write, count), motivational programme and study visit.

Conclusion

The results reveal that the CSR educational programmes have given good perspectives to the pupils, teachers, school and the surrounding community. The programmes have impacted pupils through educational exposure, a holistic approach, academic improvement, feeling motivated, encourage creativity and assist in pupil's future career development. The school's perspective on an educational programme's impact is improved as is teaching and knowledge. The programme has benefitted the community surrounding and assisted in financial assistance. The school suggested that CSR programmes should be improved by providing a variety of educational programmes, that it should be more academic focused and is to be sustained in school. CSR educational programme types in future are suggested to be academically related which should include an English language programme, information technology (IT), 21st century learning, green programme, basic skills (read, write, count), motivational programme and study visits.

The CSR educational programme initiatives in school are subsequently preparing rural children to enter to higher education so that the children are well-prepared, matured and broad-minded. This would also help children to realise their dreams and what they want to pursue in the future. In fact, this would help to generate the quality of future generations and quality of workforce. Numerous CSR educational programmes have been conducted involving pupils, teachers and the surrounding community. It should be noted that, school is not just to teach but also touch pupil's hearts by engaging with their family and rural community around. After all, in rural primary school, students are keen to obtain a formal education, followed by sustainable educational programmes (collaboration with community, companies and agencies), highly trained teachers and good teacher-student relationship. To emphasise, schools are not just getting good results, but they also equip their pupils holistically with little resources that they have. In conclusion, CSR educational programmes initiatives must be sustainable because it had great impact on pupils, teachers, schools, and the community surrounding the school.

We acknowledge the limitations of this study. The results of the study might appear to not reflect all participated schools in CSR educational programmes as the number of respondents were 10 which represents 10 schools from approximately 500 schools that participated in CSR educational programmes in throughout Malaysia. However, the sample was the representative from participated schools in CSR educational programmes. Another limitation was some of the interviewed HM were not fully involved in CSR educational programmes. Their response was from feedbacks given by the teachers in the school.

For further research, CSR educational programmes in rural school must be investigated in terms of the programme sustainability after the company has left. This is to ensure that new pupils that enrol in primary school could also get the benefit as well as to keep the private-public-chain in education.

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Understanding Cross-National Differences in Inclusive Education Coverage: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract

With the adoption and ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, inclusive education became an international human right and a global norm. But, "Education for All" remains a worldwide challenge. It appears that some countries achieved higher inclusive education rates than others. Why this is the case has barely been empirically investigated. To address this gap, this study analyzes cross-national differences in inclusive education coverage in over 50 societies. First, the data gap is addressed by providing an overview of inclusive education rates in 52 societies. In the theoretical part of the paper, hypothetical causes for the cross-national differences are discussed from a new institutionalist perspective, before concrete, testable hypotheses are derived. Third, a secondary meta-analysis based on self-assembled data from national and international sources is conducted predicting the cross-national differences by means of ordinary least squares regressions. Findings show that national income or educational expenses have no impact on the level of institutionalization of inclusive education in a society; the cross-national differences in school inclusion are mainly due to the structural conditions of the school system and its own institutional logic (especially the degree of institutional differentiation); and the definition of what is recognized as special educational needs and promoted in a national education system largely affects the extent of inclusive education coverage. The findings of this analysis prove to be a good start for future endeavors in macro-sociological and educational analyses of international inclusive education and have major policy implications.

Keywords: cross-national comparison, country-level analysis, inclusive education, new institutionalism, secondary meta-analysis, special education

With the adoption and subsequent ratification of the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN-CRPD) in 2006 (United Nations, 2006), inclusive education became an international human right and a global norm. Most of the 182 countries that signed the petition also ratified it soon after, thus expressing their commitment to reducing the exclusion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) (United Nations Office of Legal Affairs [UN-OLA], 2020). Nevertheless, "Education for All" remains a worldwide challenge and is seen as a process and goal rather than an achieved status (Powell, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015). Whereas some societies with comparatively advanced inclusive education systems (e.g., the Nordic countries of Europe) were praised for their efforts to provide education for all, in countries with highly stratified education systems, such as Germany and Switzerland, students with special educational needs remain predominantly or exclusively schooled in special schools (Biermann & Powell, 2014; Powell, 2016, 2018; Werning, 2014).

The objective of this study is to find explanations for the cross-national difference in the level of institutionalization of inclusive education. Therefore, this study for the first time analyzes cross-national differences in Inclusive Education Coverage (IEC) in over 50 societies. The article is structured as follows. First, the still existing gap in valid and reliable data on inclusive education provision across the world is addressed by providing self-assembled inclusive education rates for 52 societies. Second, hypothetical causes for the cross-national differences in IEC are discussed from a neo-institutionalist perspective, before concrete, testable hypotheses are derived. Third, the cross-national differences in IEC are empirically analyzed by means of ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions using self-assembled data from national and international sources. Finally, findings are discussed for their meaning and significance for the further development of inclusive education, before future directions and policy implications are discussed.

Literature and Data Review

Mapping Inclusive Education Coverage

The need for reliable data on inclusive education to enable evidence-based policy-making for long-term development of inclusive education systems is well recognized (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). However, although more attention is devoted to collecting data on cross-country special and inclusive education coverage (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education [EASIE], 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2005; UNESCO, 2015), serious gaps in data and research remain.

First of all, the data collection related to inclusive education is still quite problematic (Watkins et al., 2014). Apart from the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education, which collected longitudinal, comparative national data of 31 European societies, data collected by other international organizations (e.g., OECD, UNESCO, World Health Organization [WHO], United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF]) are rarely harmonized or suited to fill the existing data gap for countries outside Europe (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020).

Second, there is still a lack of systematic and sophisticated empirical studies examining the differences regarding inclusive education provision. Comprehensive cross-national analyses of the determinants and effects of Special Education Coverage (SEC) significantly contributed to our knowledge about the influence of economic and educational factors on the level of special education provision in a country (Anastasiou & Keller, 2014; Anastasiou et al., 2018). According to this research, whether more or less special education is generally provided in a

country depends on economic resources (i.e. gross national income per capita) and educational context (e.g., adult literacy rate, net enrollment in primary education, pupil teacher ratio, and school life expectancy). However, this kind of study provides few answers to the question why more pupils are schooled in inclusive settings (in the sense of the UN-CRPD) in some countries than in others. To answer this question, valid and reliable cross-national data on inclusive education coverage are necessary to enable evidence-based education policy-making.

Based on the data at hand, in most countries there has been a noticeable improvement in the provision of special needs education (EASIE, 2020; UNESCO, 2015). However, more than a decade after the adoption of the UN-CRPD, the worldwide transition from an exclusive to an inclusive organization of special education must be described as rather slow. A large proportion of SEN students is still either schooled in special schools (segregation: students are enrolled in fully separate special schools) or special classes (separation: students are enrolled in special classes in mainstream schools for more than 20 % of their time). Sometimes this kind of instruction within the regular schooling system allows for shared lessons (integration), but only if SEN students receive 80% or more of their instruction in regular classes among students without SEN can we truly speak of inclusive education according to international standards (EASIE, 2020; Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). Often, what is officially recognized as inclusive schooling does not necessarily comply with this definition (D'Alessio & Watkins, 2009; Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). In societies where the more exclusive forms of special education are socially deeply rooted and have been institutionalized over many years, it is likely that they prevent the further expansion of inclusive education (Powell, 2018). Although inclusive educational structures have been developed in all regions, there are currently very few educational systems around the world in which all pupils learn together in inclusive settings within the mainstream schooling system (Ramberg & Watkins, 2020).

Following the definition of EASIE (2020), Figure 1 reports inclusive education participation rates of SEN students based on self-assembled data from 52 societies (details on data collection in the methodology section). The data show that the proportion of SEN students in inclusive settings has considerably increased between 2008 and 2018 in many societies. In Australia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, France, and Turkey, for example, this proportion significantly increased. In other societies, not much seems to have happened since 2008. In many societies with traditionally high inclusive education rates (over 90%), such as Italy, Norway, Portugal or the United States, continuation is observed. In other societies with traditionally low inclusive schooling, such as Japan or, especially, Switzerland, only marginal or no improvement is visible. Surprisingly, in Finland, Estonia, and, especially, Sweden, inclusive schooling rates considerably decreased even.

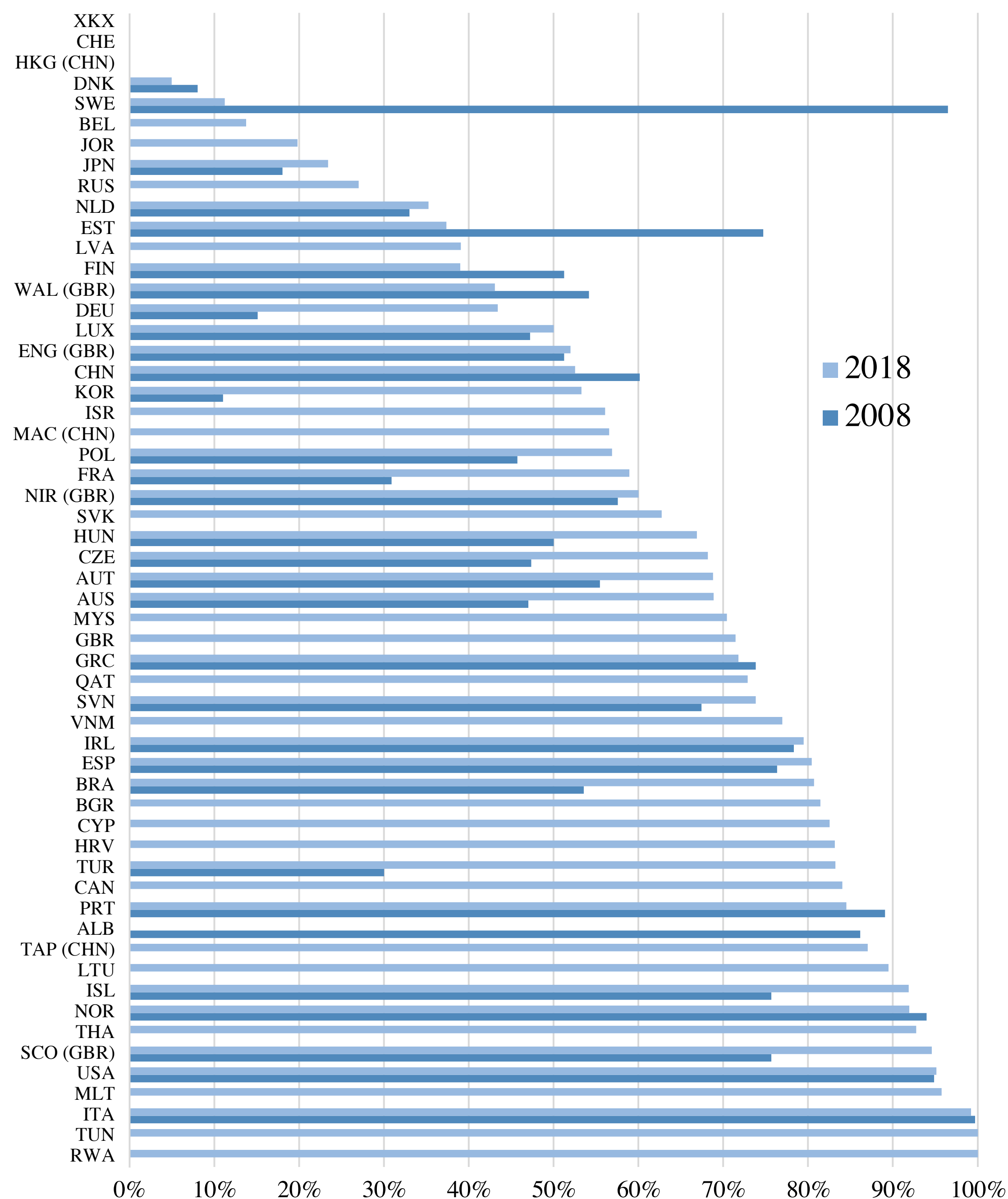

Figure 1: Percentage of students with official SEN-status attending inclusive classes in regular schools as a proportion of all students with SEN status in 52 societies, 2008 and 2018

Note: Data for 2008 for Albania from 2012; for Brazil from 2009; for China from 2007; Data for 2018 for Korea, Russian Federation, and Vietnam from 2017; for China, Canada (Ontario), Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Hungary, Macao and Thailand from 2016; for Brazil from 2015. Data for Rwanda and Tunisia are based the actually schooled number of students with SEN status; it is unclear whether all SEN students are enrolled in education.

The data presented imply a higher level of commitment to the provision of inclusive education opportunities in some countries compared to others. Why this is the case and these massive cross-national differences occur is all but clear. To address this issue, I apply neo-institutionalism in the following section and derive testable hypotheses.

Theoretical Approach: New Institutionalism

In order to clarify under which national conditions inclusion is implemented or institutionalized more comprehensively, the present work draws on theoretical assumptions of the new institutionalism. Although this theoretical perspective has so far found little application in the discussion on inclusive education, it still offers important insights for the introduction and institutionalization of inclusive school systems (Nohl, 2018). According to Berger and Luckmann (2003), institutionalization takes place as soon as habitualized actions are reciprocally typified by types of agents. Every typification that is carried out in this way is an institution (p. 58). Hence, instead of simply accepting the existence of institutions, the new institutionalism points to the importance of institutions as connecting structures between society and the individual actor. Only then, the formation, nature and change of institutions can be understood. The institutional development and establishment of inclusive education therefore depends on the overall societal recognition of instruction for all students as a common good. In most societies, however, the learning environment appropriate to the needs of students with SEN was – if at all – for the longest time located in exclusive settings such as special schools rather than in regular schools.

The institutionalization of special education support systems took place in three phases. Around 1900, guiding and structural principles of the general school system for the establishment of "institutions" for the schooling of children with disabilities were adopted (e.g., auxiliary schools in Germany; special classes in the United States). Between 1900 and 1970, schools for children with disabilities were expanded and institutionalized, with a following differentiation in the course of educational expansion. It was not until 1970 that options for common lessons for all children were pursued in different school experiments and models. However, these new concepts often found it difficult to assert themselves. Instead, the institution "special school" was accepted as necessary or even inevitable in many countries (Powell, 2009, p. 216). In these societies, the institutionalization of the special school system was extremely effective, because schools orient themselves in their organizational form on the institutionalized expectations of their environment (Meyer & Rowan, 2009): that is, in the segregating or separating schooling of children classified as possessing disabilities or SEN. With the inclusion of SEN students, schools often fear to risk their own legitimacy and thus their continued existence, regardless of whether school inclusion is more effective or not (Nohl, 2018).

Without a doubt, the resolutions passed by the UN-CRPD became a powerful instrument of global educational governance, which made inclusive education a new element of the "world culture" of education (Meyer et al., 1992) and thus part of the globally institutionalized expectation structure for education (Biermann & Powell, 2014). The effective implementation of inclusive education ultimately depends on forms of isomorphism; that is, processes of aligning school organizations to this globally institutionalized expectation structure. Three different types of isomorphism can be distinguished (Powell, 2009): the imitation of highly successful inclusive schools (mimetic isomorphism); the change of standards, classifications and expectations within special education (normative isomorphism), which led to a global diffusion of school inclusion (Biermann & Powell, 2014); and the pressure on states and their education systems to introduce inclusive education (forced isomorphism). The latter case is quite problematic, as it deviates from Berger and Luckmann's concept of institutions. Here the creation of institutions underlies no longer reciprocally typified habitualized actions, but rather explicit rules that have been internationally and/or nationally codified (Nohl, 2018).

The UN-CRPD is a perfect example of forced isomorphism, because all countries that ratified the UN-CRPD are obliged to guarantee inclusion in schools. However, school organizations are still confronted with the respective historically grown expectations and previously institutionalized support systems, which can conflict with the resolutions of the UN-CRPD. There are therefore different forms of coupling: close coupling where the school's educational practices correspond to institutionalized environmental (and policy) expectations; loose coupling wherein expectations in educational practice are reinterpreted by the schools; and decoupling which is when educational practices are completely detached from the externally communicated image of the schools and the postulated policy goals (Nohl, 2018).

The replacement of the special school system as an institution by the inclusive school is therefore a lengthy process and strongly dependent on the willingness to consistently implement inclusion. The different ways in which organizations deal with inclusion, which is influenced by internal logics and practices and carries the risk of lip service, is particularly problematic. To reduce the risk of decoupling of schools from the official goal of providing education for all and thus explain cross-national differences in IEC, four national factors are deemed especially important: economic resources, education system, political conviction, and classification of SEN in a country. The hypothetical impact of these factors on IEC is briefly discussed and the derived hypotheses to be tested in the analysis section.

Hypotheses

Economic resources. The implementation of inclusive instruction in mainstream schools is believed to be quite a costly endeavor. Whether more or fewer children receive any form of special education was found to be positively related to the economic resources of a country, in other words, to the gross national income (GNI) per capita. With higher mean income, the proportion of SEN students who receive education increases (Anastasiou & Keller, 2014; Anastasiou et al., 2018). However, these arguments fall short in countries in which an extensive special education system is already in place. In fact, cost arguments speak against the maintenance of special needs schools and in favor of inclusion. Not only is the average cost of lessons per pupil in mainstream schools lower than in special schools; human resources can be distributed differently and transport, possible accommodation and operating costs can be saved by closing special schools. Overall, it can be seen that rising costs for teachers and other educational staff are foreseeable, but falling investment and operating costs for special schools and student transport costs should more than compensate for this. In addition, demographic change is making special schools less profitable, as falling numbers of pupils per school increase operating costs, while space is freed up in mainstream schools (Sibanda, 2018). Hence, in contrast to SEC, no significant effects of national education expenditure or the mean income per capita of a country on the level of inclusive schooling are to be expected. This leads to the first hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1.* Higher mean income and educational expenditure in a country does not significantly enhance IEC.

Education system. The implementation of inclusive schooling is ultimately a question of the institutional logic with regard to selection criteria of the established school system. Educational institutional differentiation in the form of tracking and standardization arguably influences the extent to which the principle of "Education for All" is supported or prevented by the institutional logic of the education system. Tracking describes the level of stratification of an education system (Bol et al., 2014). External tracking refers to the formal differentiation of schools by tracks (school types), school maintainer (public versus private) or specializations,

or the informal differentiation according to reputation (ranking), resources, or student composition. Internal tracking (within schools) often refers to formal specializations and ability grouping, among others (Blossfeld et al., 2016). Based on in-depth evidence covering the full range of educational differentiation and institutional arrangements across 17 countries, Blossfeld et al. (2016) developed a framework to categorize four dominant models of secondary schooling with different levels of institutional differentiation, including tracking and age of first selection (from least selective to most selective): the Nordic Inclusive Model, the Individual Choice Model, the Mixed Tracking Model, and the Early Tracking Model. Entrich (2021) extended the number of societies covered by this classification to over 60. In countries with lower levels of differentiation, inclusive education should be more readily accepted and easier to integrate and implement than in highly stratified education systems. In combination with higher levels of differentiation, centrally administered high-stakes exit or entrance examinations as a form of rigid standardization of learning contents should foster higher competition for placement in elite educational tracks or the most prestigious institutions (Bol et al., 2014). Based on these institutional differences and underlying institutional logics in relation to selection criteria, varying organizational forms of learning support are to be expected (Powell, 2018). Countries with higher levels of differentiation and standardization are thus expected to have experienced more difficulties in the implementation of inclusive education.

> *Hypothesis 2*. In societies with higher levels of differentiation and standardization of education, IEC will be significantly lower.

Political conviction for inclusion. Whether inclusion is actively pursued and how many resources are made available to achieve the internationally set goal of education for all is of course largely related to when and to what extent the representatives of a country decided to introduce inclusion. Countries in which the resolutions of the UN-CRPD were signed and ratified immediately after they were presented in 2007 and in which the additional protocol was also ratified show a heightened interest in meeting the international expectations of a school for all. Although other countries have also ratified these resolutions, this may have been more a result of international pressure than based on the conviction that inclusion is absolutely necessary and should be implemented as soon as possible. There are still examples where the UN-CRPD has been ratified, but exclusive forms of special education continue to dominate and were even expanded in recent years (e.g., Switzerland). In many societies, the rhetoric is more ambitious than school realities (Powell, 2018).

> *Hypothesis 3*. In societies where the UN-CRPD was ratified earlier, the conviction to implement inclusive education is higher and thus IEC will be significantly higher as well.

Classification of SEN. In order to enjoy inclusive school education, pupils with disabilities must be officially classified as SEN students. According to estimates by the World Health Organization, around 15.3% of people across all age groups are counted in the category "moderate and severe disabilities" (WHO, 2011, p. 30), which refer to severity classes III and above. Of the 0–14-year-old population about 5.2% have SEN of this severity. However, there are very large differences in the proportion of students with SEN among the considered societies. Who ultimately receives a SEN status and who does not depends largely on what is officially recognized as SEN (D'Alessio & Watkins, 2009; Kim et al., 2019; Mithout, 2016; Ramberg & Watkins, 2020). Hence, it is not surprising that the proportion of students with an official SEN-status can vary greatly from country to country (see Figure 2).

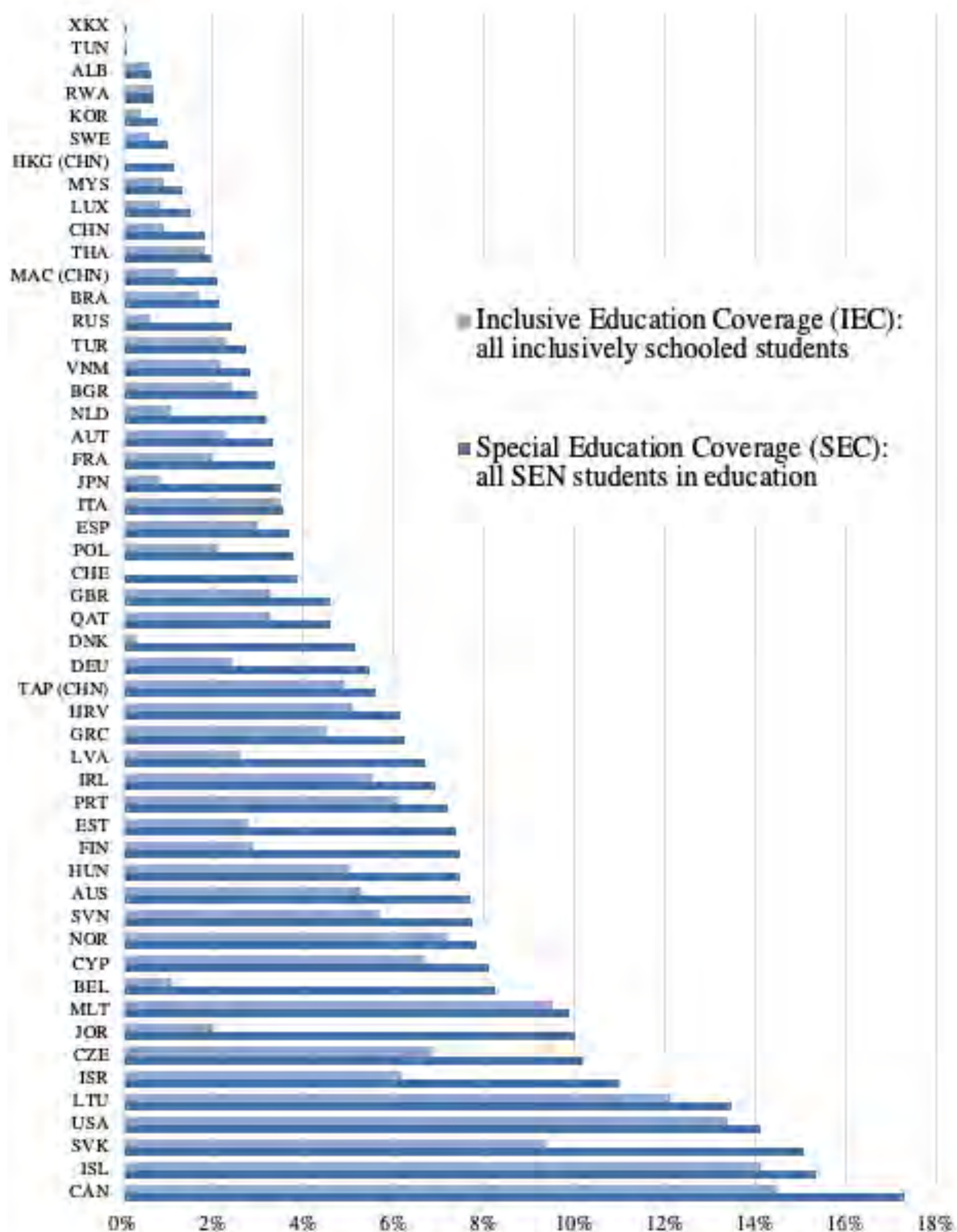

Figure 2: Special Education Coverage (SEC) and Inclusive Education Coverage (IEC) in 52 societies, 2018

Note: Data for 2018 for Korea, Russian Federation, and Vietnam from 2017; for China, Canada (Ontario), Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Hungary, and Macao from 2016; for Brazil from 2015; for Albania from 2012.

While in Sweden and Korea, for example, only about 1% of all students possess an attested SEN status, about 14% of US students are recognized as SEN students. Contrasting to countries like Korea or China, for instance, in the US almost 40% of all SEN students are recognized as having specific learning disabilities – a category that is marginal in Korea and completely missing in China (Kim et al., 2019). These significant differences in SEC between countries

refer in particular to the internal logic according to which a SEN status is assigned at all. How many students in a country receive inclusive schooling basically depends on the intrinsic logic of the system, that is, on the conditions under which someone is certified with the special SEN status and can accordingly qualify for special educational support. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the overall IEC rates shown in Figure 2 imply a clear relationship between SEC and IEC. In countries with larger proportions of students with an official certification of SEN, the potential proportion of inclusively schooled students is larger as well. Of course, the difference between SEC and IEC can be quite enormous across countries. Still, there seems to exist a general tendency. In sum, higher IEC is expected in countries where the SEN classification covers a larger range of disabilities and learning disadvantages and thus more students receive the SEN-status.

> *Hypothesis 4*. In societies with generally higher special education coverage (SEC), IEC will also be significantly higher.

Methodology

Data

The data used in this analysis cover 52 societies and come from different international (World Bank, UNESCO, United Nations, and EASIE) and national sources (ministries of education as well as national statistics bureaus). Data were targeted for the year 2018 or the closest available to that year. Table 1 provides a detailed description of all variables.

Measures

Outcome Variable: Inclusive education coverage (IEC). This measure reflects the overall percentage of students who are schooled in inclusive settings as a percentage of the overall student population in a country. Data was obtained from the European Agency Statistics on Inclusive Education (EASIE) for the 31 European countries in the sample and supplemented by data from national ministries of education and their statistics bureaus for 21 societies for other regions of the world, including the Chinese special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao. To achieve comparable measures of IEC, instead of the postulated inclusive schooling rates in the considered societies, which do not necessarily match (D'Alessio & Watkins, 2009; Ramberg & Watkins, 2020), the operational definition of an inclusive setting from the UNESCO and the EASIE was used. Accordingly, the IEC rate for all considered societies "refers to education where the child/learner with SEN follows education in mainstream classes alongside their mainstream peers for the largest part – 80% or more – of the school week" (EASIE, 2020, p. 11). Furthermore, the IEC rates used are restricted to compulsory schooling, that is, to primary and lower secondary education in most societies. According to these data, the proportion of students schooled in inclusive settings within the mainstream schooling system varies between 0 % (Hong Kong/Switzerland) and 14.53 % (Canada) with a mean of 3.75 %.

Economic resources. To test the economic argument, 2018 data on Gross Domestic Product [GDP] per capita as direct measurement of the level of national economic development were used. Data was obtained from the World Bank (https://data.worldbank.org) and national statistics. According to these data, the GPD per capita is lowest in Rwanda (782.62 US Dollar) and highest in Luxembourg (116654.26 US Dollar), with a mean of 29,702.1 US Dollar. The data on GDP were transformed into a natural logarithm (logged GDP) to resemble normal distribution. To also control for governmental spending on education as a proxy for national value of education, national educational expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP was

used. Data were obtained from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS: http://data.uis.unesco.org) showing that governmental spending on education among the considered societies is lowest in China (1.89 % of GDP) and highest in Norway (7.91 % of GDP), with a mean of 4.72 % of GDP.

Educational differentiation and standardization. To account for educational institutional differentiation across societies, following the framework put forth by Blossfeld et al. (2016) and the work of Entrich (2021), a series of dummy variables was created for the different secondary schooling models. Based on in-depth evaluation of data on educational differentiation, the most selective secondary schooling model (Early Tracking) was assigned to those 9 societies where the first major selection occurs very early (age 10 or 11) and where formal external differentiation into different school types is found. The second most selective model (Mixed Tracking) was assigned to those 32 societies where selection typically occurs at age 14 or 15 and is followed by strong formal and/or informal external differentiation. For another 5 societies, the second least selective model (Individual Choice) was classified. Here formal internal differentiation is the norm. Finally, the least selective model (Nordic Inclusive) was assigned to those 6 societies with comprehensive systems focusing on informal internal differentiation.

To control for educational standardization, the existence of centrally administered high-stakes exit or entrance examinations is included drawing on the framework and data of Bol et al. (2014) and Entrich (2021). Additional data was obtained from national reports of UNESCO (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/resources/world-data-education) and national ministries of education. In total, 36 societies possessed central exams (1), 12 did not (0), whereas in 4 countries these exams were present only in subnational regions and are represented by respective proportions (i.e., Australia: 0.81, Canada: 0.51, Germany: 0.44, and the United States: 0.09).

Political conviction for inclusion. To measure when and to what extent the representatives of a country decided to introduce inclusion, 2 variables were introduced based on data from the United Nations (https://indicators.ohchr.org): years since the ratification of the UN-CRPD: that is, the number of years which have passed since the resolutions of the UN-CRPD were ratified referencing the year 2007, where the first ratifications are documented (0 to 11 years); and ratification of the optional protocol (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Classification of SEN. The proportion of students counted as SEN students reflects the special education coverage (SEC) of a country and is thus measured as the percentage of students schooled in any special education context: in special schools, special classes, and integrated/inclusive settings. In most of the considered societies, all students with SEN are schooled in one way or the other. In some, however, there may be students with SEN not counted in these statistics, because they are not schooled in state recognized institutions but at home or elsewhere. Nevertheless, the author is confident that the data used cover the actual situation of special education in the considered countries quite well.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Country code	Country/ Society	IEC (total inclusive students)	SEC (total SEN students)	GDP per capita (in US$)	Educational expenditure (% of GDP)	Model of secondary schooling	Central exams	UN-CRPD	
								Years since rat.	Rat. of opt. prot.
ALB	Albania	0.55	0.64	5284.38	3.61	Mixed Tracking	1	5	No
AUS	Australia	5.30	7.70	57395.92	5.12	Indiv. Choice	.81	10	Yes
AUT	Austria	2.29	3.34	51525.05	5.36	Early Tracking	0	10	Yes
BEL	Belgium	1.13	8.25	47491.32	6.41	Early Tracking	0	9	Yes
BGR	Bulgaria	2.41	2.96	9423.56	4.09	Mixed Tracking	1	6	No
BRA	Brazil	1.73	2.14	9001.23	6.32	Mixed Tracking	0	10	Yes
CAN	Canada	14.53	17.30	46313.17	5.27	Nordic Inclusive	.51	8	No
CHE	Switzerland	0.00	3.86	82818.11	5.13	Early Tracking	0	4	No
CHN	China	0.95	1.80	9976.68	1.89	Mixed Tracking	1	10	No
CYP	Cyprus	6.68	8.10	28689.71	5.78	Mixed Tracking	0	7	Yes
CZE	Czech Rep.	6.95	10.19	23046.95	3.85	Early Tracking	1	9	No
DEU	Germany	2.37	5.45	47639.00	4.91	Early Tracking	.44	9	Yes
DNK	Denmark	0.26	5.13	61390,69	7.82	Nordic Inclusive	1	9	Yes
ESP	Spain	2.97	3.69	30337,68	4.21	Mixed Tracking	0	11	Yes
EST	Estonia	2.75	7.38	23258,47	4.97	Mixed Tracking	1	7	Yes
FIN	Finland	2.91	7.45	50021,29	6.38	Nordic Inclusive	1	2	Yes
FRA	France	2.00	3.39	41631,09	5.45	Mixed Tracking	1	8	Yes
GBR	United Kingdom	3.28	4.59	43043,23	5.44	Indiv. Choice	1	9	Yes
GRC	Greece	4.49	6.25	20324,31	3.96	Mixed Tracking	0	6	Yes
HKG	Hong Kong	0.00	1.16	48542,89	3.33	Mixed Tracking	1	10	No
HRV	Croatia	5.09	6.13	14920,19	3.92	Mixed Tracking	1	11	Yes
HUN	Hungary	4.99	7.47	16150,77	4.67	Early Tracking	1	11	Yes
IRL	Ireland	5.51	6.93	78621,23	3.51	Indiv. Choice	1	0	No
ISL	Iceland	14.08	15.34	72968,70	7.66	Nordic Inclusive	0	2	No
ISR	Israel	6.16	11.00	41719,73	6.09	Mixed Tracking	1	6	No
ITA	Italy	3.52	3.55	34520,09	4.04	Mixed Tracking	1	9	Yes
JOR	Jordan	1.98	10.00	4241,79	3.03	Mixed Tracking	1	10	No
JPN	Japan	0.82	3.50	39159,42	3.18	Mixed Tracking	1	4	No
KOR	Korea, Rep.	0.41	0.77	33340,27	4.33	Mixed Tracking	1	10	No
LTU	Lithuania	12.05	13.48	19080,62	3.81	Indiv. Choice	1	8	Yes
LUX	Luxembourg	0.75	1.50	116654,26	3.57	Early Tracking	1	7	Yes
LTA	Latvia	2.62	6.71	17805,28	4.40	Mixed Tracking	1	8	Yes
MAC	Macao	1.19	2.10	87208,54	2.74	Mixed Tracking	1	10	No
MLT	Malta	9.47	9.90	30133,47	4.82	Mixed Tracking	1	6	No
MYS	Malaysia	0.93	1.32	11373,23	4.48	Mixed Tracking	1	8	No
NDL	Netherlands	1.13	3.20	53048,10	5.18	Early Tracking	1	2	No
NOR	Norway	7.20	7.84	81734,47	7.91	Nordic Inclusive	1	5	No
POL	Poland	2.15	3.77	15460,64	4.56	Mixed Tracking	1	6	No
PRT	Portugal	6.09	7.21	23461,57	5.02	Mixed Tracking	0	9	Yes
QAT	Qatar	3.35	4.60	68793,78	2.86	Mixed Tracking	0	10	No
RUS	Russian Fed.	0.65	2.40	11370,81	4.69	Mixed Tracking	1	6	No
RWA	Rwanda	0.68	0.68	782,62	3.07	Mixed Tracking	1	0	Yes
SVK	Slovak Rep.	9.45	15.07	19428,12	3.94	Mixed Tracking	1	8	Yes
SVN	Slovenia	5.72	7.75	26054,54	4.78	Mixed Tracking	1	10	Yes
SWE	Sweden	0.64	1.02	54589,06	7.57	Nordic Inclusive	0	10	Yes
TAP	Taiwan	4.89	5.62	22294,00	5.05	Mixed Tracking	1	10	No
THA	Thailand	1.83	1.97	7295,48	4.12	Mixed Tracking	1	10	Yes
TUN	Tunisia	0.10	0.10	3438,79	6.60	Mixed Tracking	1	10	Yes
TUR	Turkey	2.26	2.72	9370,18	4.37	Mixed Tracking	1	9	Yes
USA	United States	13.41	14.10	62840,02	4.99	Indiv. Choice	.09	0	No
VNM	Vietnam	2.16	2.81	2566,60	4.17	Early Tracking	1	3	No
XKX	Kosovo, Rep.	0.00	0.08	4419,91	3.30	Mixed Tracking	0	0	No
Mean		**3.75**	**5.60**	**35038.48**	**4.73**	–	**.73**	7.25	–

Analysis Strategy

In this secondary meta-analysis, first, correlation statistics for the country-level predictors are presented. These correlations allow statements about fundamental relationships between variables and are important for the subsequent identification of possible mediation effects.

Second, using the percentage of IEC per country as a dependent variable, hypotheses are tested using the most popular quantitative approach to analyze country effects: OLS regressions.

Although many multi-country data sets contain thousands of individuals, most include rarely more than 30 countries. With more than 50 cases (societies) the data used here offer a comparatively high number of cases and greater reliability than most other studies (see Bryan & Jenkins, 2016).

In Table 3, the different predictor groups are independently tested before they are combined in one overall model. This way, the hypotheses are tested individually before checking which factors best describe the differences in IEC across countries.

Finally, to ensure the reliability of results, robustness and multicollinearity checks are briefly discussed.

Findings

Bivariate Correlation Statistics

Correlation statistics between all country-level variables are reported in Table 2. Cross-national differences in IEC are positively correlated with Nordic (r = .279) and Individual Choice schooling models (r = .367), and, above all, SEC in a country (r = .900), but negatively correlated with the Mixed Tracking schooling model (r = -.278). These bivariate statistics provide first support for hypotheses 1, 2, and 4.

Table 2: Bivariate correlation statistics

		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1)	*DV: Inclusive Education Coverage (IEC)*	1.00									
(2)	Mean income (logged GDP per capita, in US$)	.265	1.00								
(3)	National educational expenses (as % of GDP)	.194	**.327**	1.00							
(4)	Nordic Inclusive Model (vs other)	**.279**	**.325**	***.649***	1.00						
(5)	Individual Choice Model (vs other)	**.367**	.217	-.037	-.118	1.00					
(6)	Mixed Tracking Model (vs other)	**-.278**	***-.466***	***-.425***	***-.457***	***-.413***	1.00				
(7)	Early Tracking Model (vs other)	-.164	.156	.027	-.165	-.149	***-.579***	1.00			
(8)	Standardized exit/entrance exams (vs no)	-.147	-.222	-.256	-.120	.040	.157	-.132	1.00		
(9)	UN-CRDP: Years since ratification	-.150	.074	-.013	-.142	-.189	.223	-.020	.052	1.00	
(10)	UN-CRDP: with optional protocol (vs no)	-.075	-.038	.245	-.014	.053	-.049	.033	-.126	***.378***	1.00
(11)	Special Education Coverage (SEC)	***.900***	**.311**	.231	**.293**	**.292**	**-.328**	-.053	-.111	-.102	-.028

Note: Significant correlations ($p < .05$) are printed in bold and highly significant correlations ($p < .01$) in bold italics.

Correlations between the predictor variables are mostly weak to moderate. Notable positive correlations exist between national mean income and educational expenditure; Nordic inclusive model and mean income and educational expenditure; both UN-CRPD variables, (time since the resolutions of the convention were ratified in a country) and whether the optional protocol was ratified at all correlate with each other; and SEC and mean income, Nordic Inclusive and Individual Choice Models. These correlations indicate that while SEC is clearly related to the economic resources of a country, thus confirming past findings (Anastasiou & Keller, 2014; Anastasiou et al., 2018), IEC is not. Furthermore, in societies with more egalitarian schooling systems, SEC and IEC are generally more advanced.

Multivariate Regressions

To explain the cross-national differences in IEC, OLS regressions test the impact of national characteristics (Table 3). In model 1, the possible impact of economic resources on IEC is tested. Results show that neither with higher mean income (logged GDP per capita) nor with larger proportions of educational expenditure in a society the proportion of students receiving education in inclusive settings increases, thus confirming hypothesis 1.

Table 3: OLS Regression predicting cross-national differences in inclusive education coverage (IEC) (showing standardized beta-coefficients, *N*=52)

	M1		**M2**		**M3**		**M4**		**M5**	
Predictor groups:	**Economic Resources**		**Education System**		**Political Conviction**		**Classifi-cation**		**All predictors**	
	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Economic resources										
Mean income (logged GDP per capita, in US$)	.226								-.039	
National educational expenses (as % of GDP)	.120								.015	
Educational differentiation and standardization										
Model of secondary education (Early Tracking Model omitted)										
Nordic Inclusive Model			.360	*					.121	
Individual Choice Model			.455	**					.199	*
Mixed Tracking Model			.095						.126	
Standardized exit/entrance exams yes (vs no)			-.136						-.085	
Political conviction for inclusion										
UN-CRDP: Years since ratification					-.142				-.007	
UN-CRDP: with optional protocol yes (vs no)					-.022				-.060	
SEN classification										
Special Education Coverage (SEC)							.900	***	.851	***
Adjusted R^2	.046		.198		-.017		.805		.809	

Note: ***P<0.001; **P<0.01; *P<0.05

Model 2 then tests the influence of educational differentiation and standardization on IEC, showing that in societies with lower educational institutional differentiation (Nordic Inclusive or Individual Choice Models) the likelihood that students will be schooled in inclusive settings is significantly higher than in societies with highly differentiated systems (Early Tracking Model). Evidence for the suspected relationship between standardized examinations and IEC is not found.

As already reported in the correlation statistics, a clear impact of the official political conviction for inclusion as expressed in the speed of ratification of the UN-CRPD and its optional protocol cannot be confirmed (model 3).

Model 4 tests the assumptions related to the classification of SEN in a society. Results show similar effects to those reported in the bivariate correlations, thus further supporting hypothesis 4.

Model 5 brings together all predictors, testing for dominant effects. Results show robust effects for Individual Choice Model and SEC. It appears that SEC largely mediates other effects in the model, such as those previously found for societies with the Nordic Inclusive model of education. This model provides clear support for hypotheses 1, 2, and 4.

Robustness and Multicollinearity Checks

Given the limited number of observations, the difference in measurement of the variables from diverse data sources (possibility of noisy data), and the considerable correlations between several predictor variables, robustness and multicollinearity checks are in order. First, to check for country outliers and influential cases which could considerably affect the results due to the low number of cases (N = 52), robust regressions were carried out using the STATA routine for robust regressions (rreg). Results show no indication of biased results through the selection of countries.

Second, to make sure the estimation of coefficients is not biased due to strong correlations between predictor variables (multicollinearity), collinearity statistics were carried out and show a variance inflation factor (VIF) between 1.166 (standardized tests) and 2.240 (Nordic Inclusive model). Hence, the tolerance for all measures was well beyond the critical 0.1 level (.446 to .858), wherefore multicollinearity can be ruled out for this analysis.

Discussion

The results of the OLS regressions confirmed that there are generally no higher rates of inclusion in high-income countries or those with higher educational expenditure (hypothesis 1). It is true that there is a connection between national income and the provision of special education (Anastasiou & Keller, 2014; Anastasiou et al., 2018). However, this connection cannot be extended to inclusive education. In fact, resources that have already been provided and are thus available for special education can be redeployed for effective schooling in inclusive settings. This way, exclusive forms of special education, such as special schools and classes, could be shut down, while at the same time enhancing inclusive education provision. Ultimately, this requires conviction and the will to effectively implement and expand inclusive education in a country.

Analyses also showed that less differentiated education systems generally have higher rates of inclusion (Hypothesis 2). Institutional differences and underlying institutional logics in relation to selection criteria clearly affect the degree to which education for all is implemented. Even though no evidence was found that standardization in the form of central exams results in less inclusive schooling, the basic principles of inclusion seem to gain more recognition in countries with less stratified education systems than in those with more stratified systems.

In contrast, neither the earlier ratification of the UN-CRPD nor the additional ratification of the optional protocol, contrary to the assumptions of Hypothesis 3, lead to a noticeable increase in IEC. This implies the possibility of decoupling educational practices from fixed political goals. The effectiveness of already established special education support systems may actually prevent or at least slow down the implementation of inclusive education. Whether the political conviction regarding the absolute necessity of inclusion in school is sufficiently well covered by the two indicators chosen remains questionable though. In future work, more reliable indicators need to be used, such as national directives and reform plans with concretely formulated milestones.

The general SEC of a country is the most powerful influencing factor. The extraordinarily strong effect of the coefficient as well as the high R2, which alone explains 80% of the variance, are proof of the decisive connection between the inclusion rate and the general belief in the importance of special needs education in general. In countries with a higher proportion of schoolchildren with certified SEN, after the adoption of the UN-CRPD, a higher proportion of inclusively schooled schoolchildren can be found on average.

Taking into account the results of the bivariate correlations, an important mediation effect can be isolated: SEC mediates significantly the effects of the secondary schooling model. This suggests that the cross-national variation in IEC is not only highly linked to SEC in a country, but that higher SEC and IEC are generally more common in societies with lower educational institutional differentiation (e.g., societies employing the Nordic Inclusive or Individual Choice Models).

For future research, it will become increasingly important to clarify whether increasing inclusive education rates are actually due to improved conditions and organizational change or due to the softening of the SEN classification.

Conclusion

The findings of this work lead to the following conclusions. Firstly, the theoretical approach employed in this analysis, the new institutionalism, proved beneficial for the understanding of the institutional development and establishment of inclusive education based on the societal recognition of "Education for All" as a common good. The further development of education systems towards this goal largely depends on determined educational policies, which can only have success if politics and public commonly value and push inclusive education. Since the UN-CRPD and other similar agreements are examples of forced isomorphism, the danger of decoupling the set goal of education for all from educational practices in school is likely. So long as school systems are characterized by high educational institutional differentiation and its immanent institutional logic, a fully inclusive education system will not be achieved. Hence, whether a shift towards full inclusion becomes reality largely depends on how willing policy-makers and societies at large are to change their education systems, focusing stronger on equality instead of competition, stratification and excellence. Comprehensive education reforms targeting the whole education system are necessary to enable fully inclusive education.

Second, and connected to this point, the cross-national differences in inclusive education are not least due to what is officially recognized as SEN and promoted in an education system. The national differences in the classification or attribution of what is considered SEN are highly problematic and often serve to overlook students with actual need for inclusive schooling. The results of this work thus call for an international measure of SEN and corresponding international standards and subsequent education reforms targeting the general education system.

Third, this analysis also shows how different factors generally assumed to be influential (e.g., economic resources, political conviction) were found to exert no effect on the provision of inclusive education. Additional financial expenses due to the change from an exclusive to an inclusive school system are not necessarily required. Instead, policy makers need to create legal and administrative options for a dovetailing and reallocation of existing resources. Political postulates must ultimately be followed by action in order to fully establish inclusive education.

In sum, the findings of this analysis are a good start for future endeavors in macro-sociological and educational analyses of international inclusive education. The quite challenging collection of data to meet the international standard definition of inclusive education was and remains a prerequisite for this kind of comparative analysis. Future studies should extend the range of countries, consider different and other country-level measures as well as multi-level modeling to connect macro- with micro-level data, and stronger concentrate on the collection and analysis of trend-data.

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Educational Experiences of Adolescent Mothers while Studying College in the Philippines

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Abstract

Adolescent pregnancy is a significant societal issue that results in lost opportunities for teenage girls in both developed and developing countries. This phenomenological research study explored the lived experience of adolescent mothers during their college years. Eight participants were asked, via unstructured interview, to share their experiences as college students in the midst of pregnancy. Data was analyzed using Collaizi's method, while member checks and expert audits of interview outputs were done to ensure trustworthiness. Results show that the participants went through several stages in their plight: they faced the complexities of adolescent pregnancy alongside college education; dealt with life and educational conflicts; appreciated the importance of education; found the resolve to carry on for their child; and dreamt of a better future for their families. These findings were clustered into themes and related to Parson's Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency theory, as adolescent pregnancy paved the way for teenagers to assimilate society's expectations of responsible adulthood. Consistent with academic literature, the participants' experiences show that adolescent mothers are vulnerable in the education setting, and need proper guidance to achieve their full potential. This research can serve as groundwork for initiating several educational reforms. A multicomponent intervention program was developed that is rooted in school and community partnerships.

Keywords: adolescent development, educational resilience, inclusive education

Adolescent pregnancy is an issue with significant societal impact worldwide. Around 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 years old give birth every year (World Health Organization, 2014). In the Philippines, it is estimated that 1 in 10 Filipino teenagers get pregnant (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018), making the country the only Asia Pacific nation with a significant rise in teenage pregnancy. Poverty is inextricably linked to adolescent childbearing because it hinders young mothers' ability to attend school and find good job opportunities.

Several studies have been undertaken to shed light on the issues pertaining to adolescent pregnancy, but most of them have explored the matter with little regard for its human element. This study is particularly relevant today, particularly in the Philippine setting given the rising number of teenage pregnancies in the country and the less-than-ideal circumstances they have to deal with in the course of their childbearing.

This study, therefore, seeks to take an in-depth look at adolescent pregnancy, with a focus on its human element. It aims to answer the research question, "What is the lived experience of college students who are adolescent parents?" Such understanding is key to implementing truly meaningful programs that will benefit this vulnerable and disadvantaged group.

Literature Review

Education as a tool for social progress is an important solution to global challenges as it gives people access to science and technology (Hang-Chuon, 2017), familiarizes them with social norms and develops moral sense (Shah et al., 2016), and fosters innovative work attitudes (Overtoom, 2000). Furthermore, educating people improves personal (Shogren et al., 2017) and professional outcomes (Benett et al., 2011) that transcend nations (Ampofo et al., 2015) and lead to sustainable development (Chey & Khieu, 2017).

Education drives the movement of the social conditions of these changing times as long as it is implemented in an inclusive manner that will not contribute to the collective destruction of nations and communities (UNESCO-MGIEP [Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development], 2017; United Nations, 2015). In particular, education should be made accessible to everyone regardless of gender and vulnerabilities. This inclusivity can be actualized by streamlining curriculums and integrating inclusive educational policies for female students (Bericat & Sánchez Bermejo, 2016; Hsiao-Chin & Shu-Ching, 2014; Karam, 2014). In the Philippines, several steps have been considered to ensure that all women will get equal access to quality education, notably the institution of laws that discourage oppression of women, such as the Magna Carta of Women, Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012, and Gender Streamlining of Higher Education.

Research shows that causes of adolescent pregnancy are rooted in the interplay of many factors. In particular, family, peer, community, and societal influence are among the major reasons for early pregnancy of adolescent girls (Asnong et al., 2018; Campero et al., 2014; Fuller et al., 2018; Krugu et al., 2016; Morón-Duarte et al., 2014; Sámano et al., 2017; Sycharuen et al., 2018; Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Economic and situational circumstances also discourage young women from early pregnancy due to the perceived consequences of childbearing (Charlton et al., 2018; Psaki, 2016). Other precursors of early parenthood include the presence or lack of formal schooling (Almeida & Aquino, 2011; Devkota et al., 2018; Glynn et al., 2018), parental supervision and involvement (Copeland, 2017), aggressive behavior and substance abuse (Allen & Walter, 2018), and knowledge of oral contraception (Burr et al., 2013; Caffe et al., 2017).

According to literature, choices in resolving issues of adolescent pregnancy revolve around three options: parenthood, abortion, and adoption (Derlan et al., 2018; Gama Ibiapina et al., 2016; Gomez-Scott & Cooney, 2014; Lohan et al., 2013; Mann et al., 2015; Mokwena et al., 2016;). These options are guided by personal, religious, filial, and educational orientation (Bell et al., 2013; Biney & Nyarko, 2017; Challa et al., 2017; Chi Watts et al., 2015; Loke & Lam, 2014; Ndjukendi et al., 2017; Shahabuddin et al., 2017).

There are several implications to early pregnancy. Physically, it affects the adolescent mother because the pregnancy stresses both her body and the growing baby (Jeha et al., 2015; Kansu-Celice et al., 2017; Loto et al., 2009; Pauli et al., 2013; Pires et al., 2014; Sokulmez & Ozenoglu, 2013; Xavier et al., 2018). Socially, adolescent pregnancy results in significant changes to family roles and to community functioning (Annang et al., 2014; Aparicio et al., 2016; Dalton, 2015; Epstein et al., 2018; Hindin, 2014; Kleine, 2005; Shpiegel & Cascardi, 2018; Yussif et al., 2017). Educationally, teenage pregnancy poses difficulties to students as parenting roles can sometimes come into conflict with academic tasks (Almeida & Aquino, 2011; Glynn et al., 2018; Kleine, 2005). Ultimately, social stigma arises, further complicating the already complex circumstances the adolescent mother has to deal with (Banerjee et al., 2009; The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002). Interspersing the literature, the findings of this research were understood in the lens of Parson's theory of Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration, and Latency or the AGIL model (1970).

The majority of research cited was quantitative in nature and failed to explain the whole phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy. The interplay of the many factors and stories leading to young motherhood were not documented properly and adequately. The meaning of the teenage pregnancy experience was reduced in richness because of the quantitative understanding of it. This is the reason why a more nuanced exploration of this issue is needed moving forward.

Method

Research design and setting

This study used the phenomenological approach that explored the lived experiences of adolescent mothers during their college education. In particular, this study took a descriptive phenomenology approach, which discovered the invariant or universal essence of schooling while being pregnant and parenting. It was conducted in the context of Philippine higher education, with all participants living and studying in urban areas within Metro Manila.

Sampling and sample size

Eight participants were recruited through purposive sampling. Maximum variation was employed in selecting adolescent mothers who have shared demographic characteristics that cut across cases and have emerged out of heterogeneity. The following characteristics were considered: experienced teenage pregnancy while in college, current age, type of school attended, religion, and life circumstances. The only exclusion criterion is adolescent pregnancy outside college education. Preliminary interpretation of responses was done vis-à-vis data collection to identify data saturation. No new themes and significant statements were identified after the 8th participant was interviewed. At this point, the sample size was deemed sufficient since data saturation had been reached based on the inductive thematic saturation model proposed by Saunders et al. (2017).

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher kept a reflexive journal on his own feelings and prejudgment of the phenomenon. In this way, judgmental attitudes were kept in check and were not conveyed to the participants. They were interviewed in-depth in an unstructured manner to find out the answer to the question: "What is the lived experience of college students who are adolescent parents?" Follow-up questions were asked such as, "What was your initial reaction when you learned of your situation?" and "What was the reaction of your significant others when they learned that you were pregnant?" Contextual questions were also asked as the interview unfolded naturally.

Some adolescent mothers were selected based on the researcher's knowledge of them meeting the aforementioned criteria. Others were selected based on referrals from previous participants. Interviews were conducted in private, with the participants' convenience and comfort in mind. The researcher listened to the participants and offered neither advice nor personal experience. A psychologist was also on standby to provide psychological support where necessary. The participants were allowed to have a support person with them throughout the interview.

Data Analysis

Conversations were transcribed and assigned codes using a scheme. Data were analyzed using Collaizi's method for procedural interpretation of phenomenology. The steps involve familiarization with the narratives, identifying and assigning codes to significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing exhaustive descriptions, producing the fundamental structure, and verifying the fundamental structure. Themes ultimately emerged as data were sorted and perused. Total immersion in the data gathered was necessary to ensure a thorough description and understanding of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness of Data

Trustworthiness of data is an important cornerstone of qualitative research. Its four dimensions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were given careful consideration. Strengthening these aspects is necessary to properly portray the phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy. Credibility, or the confidence in the truth of data and its interpretation, was ensured through member checking. Each participant was given a chance to review the outputs of the analysis. Interview transcripts were appended in the full manuscript to ensure transferability, or the extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings. Transferability provides a paper trail from which other researchers can get ideas to transfer the conclusions of this study to other circumstances. Independent expert auditing was conducted to ensure confirmability (objectivity of data) and dependability (stability of data over time and conditions).

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was secured for this study from the University Ethics Review Committee of Adamson University (Protocol Number: 2018-04-GRA-01). The participants were asked if they were willing to participate in the study. The processes, risks, and benefits of this research were explained thoroughly to the participants, and their written consent was obtained. They were assigned pseudonyms to keep their identities private, and the interviews themselves were conducted privately. The interview transcripts were kept confidential, audio records were deleted after transcription, and personal information were not disclosed to anyone.

Limitations of the Study

This study has potential limitations. Transferability, or the extent to which qualitative findings can be transferred to other settings, may be limited due to the sample size. However, the in-depth interviews generated significant descriptions of observed transactions and processes. Data transcription and management can dilute the richness of data, as expected, in handling qualitative information. This was addressed by thoughtful transcription of narratives.

Findings

The participants shared their thoughts, feelings, and rationalizations on the circumstances, complexities, struggles, challenges, worth, and meaning of life as a pregnant young woman enrolled in college. They come from different family backgrounds, religious orientation, and socioeconomic classes. Table 1 describes the profile of the participants.

Table 1: Summary of the participants' demographic profile

Participant	Age at First Pregnancy	Current Age	School Attended	Religion	Life Circumstances
Aliyah	17	24	Private, non-sectarian	Catholic	Eldest among 4 children; not allowed to be in civil union
Bettina	18	22	Private, non-sectarian	Catholic	Lived with the child's father and eventually got married
Candice	19	21	Private, non-sectarian	Catholic	Mother also experienced teenage pregnancy
Denise	18	23	Private, non-sectarian	Iglesia ni Cristo	Lives with foster parents; a victim of partner violence
Erich	18	31	Private, sectarian	Catholic	Supported by relatives in her studies and eventually obtained her doctoral degree
Florence	18	25	Private, sectarian	Iglesia ni Cristo	Stopped studying during her first pregnancy; lived with husband after giving birth
Geneva	19	21	Public, non-sectarian	Catholic	Mother and sister also had adolescent pregnancy
Halima	19	24	Public, non-sectarian	Born-again Christian	Got pregnant in cohabitation; stopped studying due to parenting

Data from the interviews revealed five significant themes: *Facing the ordeal*, *Path to parenthood*, *Embracing the value of education*, *Standing up and being strong*, and *Envisioning the family*. These themes were related to each other to capture the full meaning of the phenomenon.

Theme I: Facing the Ordeal

Facing the ordeal describes the college students' experiences, including gender and sexuality issues, during the pregnancy. The complexities and circumstances of adolescent pregnancy were narrated and related to their college education. They explained the different emotional challenges they faced during the pregnancy, such as fear of what will happen, uncertainty with

the future, anger to oneself, denial, social stigma, prejudice from family and friends, and discontinued education.

This theme is best described by Aliyah's statement:

> *I was apprehensive of my child's future. Of course, I was anxious because this is what I did. I don't want this to happen also to my child. I thought of how I will raise my child if I go abroad, with my boyfriend. I will bring him.*

Erich also aired her similar concern:

> *My initial response was fear. I felt afraid that I won't be able to fulfill my dream. I got afraid to the point that when I had an ultrasound and I learned that I was pregnant, I cried because I want to finish my studies.*

Theme II: Path to Parenthood

Path to parenthood describes the college students' experiences during and immediately after the pregnancy. It explains the internal and external battles of the young mothers during childbearing and after giving birth. It is characterized by health issues (their own and their child's), socioeconomic sacrifices, educational struggles, and family adjustments. The participants described how they struggled with the demands of motherhood and the difficulties they continuously face to fulfill this role. It also portrays the totality of the life lived by the participants after their pregnancy.

Bettina talks about her hardships in balancing studies and parenting roles:

> *It's really staying late. It's really about sleep. Sometimes, I cry already. Because during duty, you need to wake up early. My baby's awake in the evening. That's why my husband and I seem to get colds and cough every month. Every time I go to our clinic, the doctor says it must be due to fatigue.*

Denise shared her experience as a battered wife:

> *He punches me. One time, I even went to the police because I had bruises all over. It's like this, there was no one at their place, and a relative died. Relatives came to help at the wake, like in bayanihan* [community cooperation]. *Then the kids and our child were left with us. When it was just the two of us, we had an argument. The kids saw us quarreling. He hit me with an arnis* [cane]*, which the tanods* [public safety officers] *use.*

Theme III: Embracing the Value of Education

Embracing the value of education explains how the young mothers developed a deeper appreciation of their college education after their pregnancy. It also tackles issues about their individual worth and how they view the significance of completing their college education vis-a-vis providing a quality family life.

Geneva's view best reflects the essence of this theme:

> *Now, my plan is to finish school. Hopefully, I really can finish for my family's future.*

Denise's statement also supports this theme:

> *It's like this, Mama said that she will petition us in the US when I am done with my schooling. What I plan is to go abroad also so I can provide for my child's needs.*

Theme IV: Standing up and Being Strong

Standing up and being Strong reveals the adolescent mothers' resolve to carry on for the benefit of their child. It highlights the different support systems that have helped them better navigate this unexpected and difficult period.

Bettina considers this life event as transformative, noting:

> *It's life-changing. Because before I got pregnant, I sleep in anyone's home* (cries). *I am closer with my friends. I am always at my friend's house, like that. Because my Mama is not looking for me anyway. But when I got pregnant, it suddenly became okay. My approach in life became better. Before, I really don't care. Now, I know how to decide and am more responsible* (smiles).

Candice's sharing captures the support she received during her plight:

> *It's my father. He was the one who supported me. Even now, it's a good thing that he is supportive. I thought he will send me away. But I am thankful that my father gave me a chance to study.*

Theme V: Envisioning the Family

Envisioning the family encapsulates the adolescent mothers' dream for a better future for their child and family. It takes a look at their mental picture of their family's bright future and the reconciliation of all conflicts and grief during the pregnancy.

As Erich shared:

> *I continued with my studies but he stopped. Now, he is the one studying. He is taking Criminology. I continued because I thought, what if I become the dean, or be the university president? My husband might get insecure that I have many achievements but not him. I've enrolled him at San Sebastian.*

Halima's religious belief helped in her experience:

> *But there were times that fate tests us. But thank God, we still remained together.*

Table 2: Summary of emerging themes, categories, and subcategories

Theme	Category	Subcategory
I: Facing the ordeal	Emotional challenges	Fear of what will happen
		Uncertainty with the future
		Anger to self
		Denial
	Consequences of action	Stigma from community
		Prejudice from family and friends
		Discontinued education
II: Path to parenthood	Health concerns	Carrying the child to term
		Effects on general wellbeing
	Socioeconomic sacrifices	Finding ways to provide for the child
		Fewer social meetups
	Educational struggles	Difficulty in studying
		Unable to continue studying
		Frequent absenteeism
	Family adjustments	Isolation from partner
		Co-parenting
		Violence or neglect
		Transition to parenthood
III: Embracing the value of education	Key to progress	Search for better living conditions
		Moving forward in life
	Key to independence	Emancipation from current situation
		Freedom to decide for the child's future
IV: Standing up and being strong	Support of partner and family	Educational support
		Affective support
		Financial support
		Caregiving support
	Lessons learned	Accepting the things that will not change
		Maturity in one's outlook
		Motivation for self-improvement
V: Envisioning the family	A bright future	For my family
		For myself
	Resolution of conflicts	Forgiveness
		Marriage and togetherness

Discussion

Theme I: Facing the Ordeal

Emotional challenges include fear of what will happen, uncertainty with the future, anger to oneself, and denial. These emotions were identified because of the seemingly insurmountable adversities that these women experienced during their pregnancy (Asnong et al., 2018; Chi Watts et al., 2015; Ndjukendi et al., 2017).

Perceptions of emotional burden on the part of the adolescent mothers emanate from the thought of communicating their situation to their parents (Lloyd, 2010). Consequently, the feelings of the young mothers correspond to the stages of grieving, where humans undergo the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance in the face of losing something

(Kübler-Ross, 1969). The thought of losing academic opportunities due to early pregnancy evokes feelings of fear, uncertainty, anger, and denial, which also correspond to the five phases of grief. The consequences of adolescent pregnancy, on the other hand, include stigma from the community, prejudice from family and friends, and discontinued education.

Early pregnancy outside of marriage also begets social stigma (Banerjee et al., 2009; Copeland, 2017; Mokwena et al., 2016). This stigma is likely a direct consequence of conservative cultural sensibilities shaped by Catholic doctrines in a predominantly Christian country. Theoretically, the participants' reactions to their pregnancy can be best explained by, and are related to, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development.

Identity formation is a primary task that adolescents are expected to learn. During this stage, adolescents are concerned with their individuality and how others would perceive them (Erikson, 1959). Their perceptions of what other people would say would explain the subcategories of stigma from the community and prejudice from family and friends that emerged from the interviews.

Theme II: Path to Parenthood

The health concerns of adolescent mothers include carrying their child to term and their own wellbeing. Many research studies suggest that adolescent pregnancy increases the risk of maternal complications, such as anemia, preeclampsia, depressive episodes, and other severe health conditions (Jeha et al., 2015; Loto et al., 2009; Pauli et al., 2013; Sokulmez & Ozenoglu, 2013).

Additionally, adolescent pregnancy and motherhood were predictors of poor economic outcomes, as the young mother would need to find means to support childbearing and childrearing expenses (Banerjee et al., 2009; Shpiegel & Cascardi, 2018; The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2002).

Educational struggles experienced by adolescent mothers include difficulty studying, inability to continue schooling, and frequent absenteeism. The demands of motherhood can divide the attention of college students (Almeida & Aquino, 2011; Glynn et al., 2018; Kleine, 2005), and not getting a college degree can, in turn, impact the adolescent mothers' immediate and future families (Tang et al., 2016). A vicious cycle is inevitably created even as it can be remedied by education.

Family adjustments include the subcategories of isolation from their partner, co-parenting, violence, and neglect and/or transition to parenthood. Several changes in family dynamics occur during adolescent pregnancy. Firstly, some adolescent men may opt not to accept the challenge of growing into teen fatherhood; hence, they neglect their responsibilities, abuse their partner, or isolate themselves from their partners (Derlan et al., 2018; Lohan et al., 2013; Uengwongsapat et al., 2018). This unfortunate plight is to be expected because these are stressful life events (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) that force adolescent mothers to learn practical life skills and wisdom (Goodman, 1995).

Theme III: Embracing the Value of Education

Education as a key to progress is viewed as one of the main reasons many adolescent mothers are determined to continue their education. It also helps that they receive support and encouragement from their significant others (Copeland, 2017; Krugu et al., 2016; Sycharuen et al., 2018; Uengwongsapat et al., 2018; Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). Achieving independence is

important to adolescent mothers who come from troubled households, and it may be explained by their desire to break free from the stressful situation they are living in (Campero et al., 2014; Dalton, 2015; Hindin, 2014). Completing one's education is the motivation of adolescent mothers, as they are likely aware of how a college education can help them better adapt to life's challenges (Lewin, 1947; Roy, 1980).

Theme IV: Standing up and Being Strong

Support from their partner and family includes but is not limited to educational, affective, financial, and caregiving. This category demonstrates the power of support systems in enabling adolescent mothers to overcome difficult situations (Bell et al., 2013; Challa et al., 2017; Derlan et al., 2018; Loke & Lam, 2014; Mann et al., 2015; Morón-Duarte et al., 2014; Shahabuddin et al., 2017). Lessons learned include the subcategories of accepting things that will not change, maturity in one's outlook, and motivation for self-improvement. The meaningful life experiences of adolescent mothers influence them to have a more positive outlook that can serve as springboard for self-improvement (Gama Ibiapina et al., 2016).

The appreciation of education's value helps adolescent mothers actualize life lessons to improve their current state. With the difficulties they have faced, the young mothers have realized their responsibilities to ensure the welfare of the child and then develop an educational resilience despite the emotional, social, psychological, economic, and educational challenges they have faced and are likely still facing (Duckworth & Gross, 2016).

Theme V: Envisioning the Family

Adolescent mothers yearn to realize their full potential towards family development. The participants' experiences molded them to anticipate challenges in the future, and act in a socially acceptable manner (Challa et al., 2017; Gomez-Scott & Cooney, 2014; Tang et al., 2016). Resolution of conflicts reflects the reconciling experiences they experienced during the course of their pregnancy. The ideation of a united family is a common attitude among adolescent parents, as it is viewed as an important element in correct social functioning (Derlan et al., 2018; Lohan et al., 2013). These views are manifestations of what the adolescent mothers have learned after overcoming hardships (Dweck, 2000; Mezirow, 2009).

Validating the Phenomenon

The lived experiences of adolescent mothers and the stages they went through reflects Parson's AGIL paradigm. Ordeals, challenges, and hardships were perceived by the participants as circumstances they must "adapt" to. These mothers endured emotional setbacks, social disapprovals, educational struggles, economic sacrifices, domestic violence, abuse, and neglect that strengthened their worldview of education. With the life episodes they had, the adolescent mothers embraced the value of education and built their "goals and aspirations." They realized that their life is no longer centered around them, but on the welfare of their children. Adjusting to their new role, the adolescent mothers "integrate" themselves to society by standing up and being strong for their families. Having a firm resolve, they envisioned a sustainable and maintained future for their significant others. These actions have enabled the adolescent mothers to assimilate to society's expectations of responsible adulthood.

Conclusion

Consistent with the literature reviewed and social theories mentioned, it can be concluded that the lived experiences of being a pregnant adolescent while in college can be ascribed into themes, and that the adolescent mothers have evolved to become enduring and responsible

adults. They have realized the importance of continuing their college education as a key to progress, independence, and improved life quality. This qualitative research shows that adolescent mothers are vulnerable in the education setting and need proper guidance to achieve their full potential.

Recommendations

This phenomenological research affirms the many struggles young mothers faced during this significant life event and its positive impact. Educational administrators can learn from these young mothers in formulating inclusive and pluralistic school policies. The following recommendations are presented, considering the adolescent mothers' lived experiences:

1. Establish a sustainable teenage pregnancy program for college students who had adolescent pregnancy by identifying a core group.
2. Develop a network of support systems that can serve as an information and assistance resource for childrearing adolescents.
3. Create avenues for continued training and livelihood to augment for lost educational and economic opportunities brought by adolescent pregnancy.
4. Assimilate the educational circumstances of teenage motherhood into school policies and curriculum.
5. Design mechanisms to monitor and refer incidences of adolescent pregnancy in school and in the community.

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African Immigrant Teachers Teaching Young EFL Learners: A Racial Discrimination Study

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Turkey

Abstract

Teaching English language to young learners in an English as a Foreign Language/English as a Second Language context could be challenging especially for African immigrants, as they face varying arrays of challenges ranging from low wages, staff abuse, and other racial discriminations. A lot has been written about racially related issues in our school system yet there are limited works of literature that focus on the challenges of African immigrant English as a Second Language teachers with regards to racial discrimination. To investigate this, a mixed-method research design was used to elicit information from 68 African immigrant English as a Second Language teachers, teaching young English as a Foreign Language learners in 3 countries. The participants were purposively chosen after obtaining written and oral consent from them. A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions were instruments for data collection. Reliability and validity checks were carried out before administering the questionnaire. After analysis, a notable finding was that African immigrant teachers felt unaccepted by the host communities and this made it difficult for the English as a Second Language learners to listen to classroom instructions given by these immigrant teachers. Again, the parents of these learners find it difficult to accept African immigrant teachers teaching their children as they deemed them incompetent to teach them. Other findings of the study were vital in making pedagogical conclusions on racial discrimination issues encountered by African immigrant English as a Second Language teachers. The ways forward for an all-inclusive educational system devoid of ethnic, religious, sexuality and racial issues were suggested.

Keywords: African immigrants, English as a foreign language, English as a second language, inclusive education, racial discrimination, racism

Introduction

Research on all-inclusive education has a long tradition, yet it seems that a lot of these studies focus on learner- centered issues of color, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability and many more. For decades, one of the most popular ideas in social justice related educational literature is the idea that everyone, regardless of color or race, should benefit equally from educational services without discrimination or any form of social injustice (Shum et al., 2020). Recent developments have revealed that African immigration statistics increased over the years resulting from individuals of other countries moving from their location to different destinations especially to the US, UK, and across Europe (Clemens et al., 2018; Fouka et al., 2020; Ousey & Kubrin, 2013). It is recorded that in the United States alone, the African immigration population grew to over 47 million in 2015 which represents over 18% of 244 million immigrants all over the world (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). Switzerland and Canada have 24.9% and 21.9% of the entire world immigrants (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, 2016) which shows the popular destinations of these immigrants. Because of this growing African immigrant populace, there is a high demand for job and employment even though a lot of countries promulgate special labor policies that make the employment of these African immigrants difficult (Huot et al., 2020; Udah et al., 2019).

In the past several decades, the United Nations has played an important role in ensuring that immigrants all over the world are treated with care as they acknowledge that most of them could be victims of war and economic hardship from Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Libya, Somalia and many other countries (OECD, 2015; Rattansi, 2020). The calls for equality and social justice have continued, especially with regards to employment and acceptance of these African immigrants into the societies into which they have migrated. Though these calls have been consistent, little has been achieved, especially in education, as stories of forced labor, payment inequalities, abuse, rape and racism continue to hover. Many writers have written in this field in a bid to expose the ills happening to migrant parents and their children living abroad, yet it seems that little or nothing is being done to minimize the level of abuse, discrimination and educational social injustice meted out to these African immigrants (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020; Maguire-Jack et al., 2020; Park et al., 2020). This field of study is sometimes referred to as educational social justice, yet it is a field of study that deals with issues of abuse, racism, and violence against people of color. This field has gradually broadened to cover African immigrants' children and their parents living abroad. A new dimension of this study focuses on African migrant English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers who are living and working abroad, facing terrible working conditions while working with their colleagues of different races and ethnicity.

Specifically, it is tougher for immigrants from an ESL country (English is a national language) who are to teach children from an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) country (English is not a native language) as there have been several recorded issues of abuse and racist discrimination in these areas (Kachru, 1992; Woo et al., 2020). Several countries have promoted employment policies which specify jobs that migrants can do and the ones they cannot do (Hayes et al., 2020; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020), again emphasis being placed on certain salary ranges of African immigrants and working conditions while working abroad (Shum et al., 2020). Studies have shown that these policies have never considered educational qualification or different arrays of competencies before making such policies (Bastos et al., 2014; Joseph et al., 2020; Rattansi, 2020). A previous study suggests that countries hosting African migrants deserve a right to protect and provide jobs/ employments to their citizens yet

embracing the doctrine of equality and social justice to treat others equally and in fairness (Henson et al., 2013; Renyet al., 2020).

A myriad of problems continues to arise from underpayment, abuse, long hours of work, and issues of discrimination in the workplace (Bayor, 2018; Esses, 2020; Zhou et al., 2016). This is a complex problem that requires urgent attention as there is little or no previous research focusing on issues affecting African immigrant ESL teachers and their challenges. There has been less previous evidence in the literature that unveils these issues as it seems that most works of literature focus largely on discrimination and abuse related issues as affecting immigrants from different ethnic groups. One way to overcome these problems is through thorough research which may help alleviate if not eradicate these issues of racial discrimination among African immigrants. The aim of this study was to examine and investigate the challenges of African immigrant ESL teachers teaching EFL learners, eliciting information from them on their challenges at work. This will foster social justice and ensure all-inclusive education both for the students and the teachers.

Literature Review

Literature on all-inclusive education strongly suggests embracing equity and equality for all across the educational sector. Many authors have argued that maintaining ethnic homogeneity with regards to citizens working in their country versus immigrants working abroad has continued to be an issue of serious debate (Arendt, 2020; Small & Pager, 2020; Wingfield & Chavez, 2020). For example, recent research suggests that job applicants with foreign-sounding names have 30% of less chances of getting jobs in Belgium as compared to the ones with African-sounding names (Statistik Austria, 2017), yet previous research showed that in the Netherlands, especially around 2015, out of 4 recruiting agencies, three are likely to recruit white employees rather than foreigners whereas African immigrants are less likely to be employed in same job regardless their qualifications (Arseneault, 2020; OECD, 2016; Park et al., 2020; Statistik Austria, 2017). Again, seminal contributions have been made by educational researchers on social justice related topics and they assert that in countries like Finland, United Kingdom and other European countries, job and employment opportunities do rely mostly on tedious and informal process that are difficult for ethnic minorities (Edwards & Ortega, 2016; Statistik, 2017).

Furthermore, certain labor policies ensure that qualified African immigrants are not employed (Arendt, 2020; Bevelander, 2020; Brell et al., 2020).For example, in Denmark, United Kingdom, and Spain, high rates of over-qualification cases exist, African immigrants are usually under-represented in managerial positions and in Germany they are represented in lowest ranks of the earnings with 25% income less than the national net income (Devakumar et al., 2020; Maguire-Jack et al., 2020;Statistik Austria, 2017). There have been numerous studies that investigated and unveiled that people of African descent and immigrants in Portugal are over-represented in the secondary labor market with low skills, fewer opportunities, job insecurities, and low salaries (Wingfield & Chavez, 2020;Small & Pager, 2020), yet it is reported that 28% of migrant women of African descent hold a university degree compared to 28% of Spanish women without appropriate competencies and qualifications (Huijnk & Andriessen, 2016; Kim et al., 2020; United Nations, 2015; Small & Pager, 2020). Previous studies have also shown clearly that in Poland and Cyprus, African immigrant workers do earn less as compared to citizens (Department of Industrial and Employment Relations, 2014; United Nations, 2015).

However, while there are other looming issues in language teaching and learning like student engagement strategies for online education, anxiety related issues, and the need for improved language teaching methodologies (Diane, 2019; Hanifa, 2018; Ironsi, 2020), several studies reiterate that racial prejudice and discrimination issues continue to loom. Prior research suggests that in Estonia and Hungary, African refugees have been severely exploited by their employers and colleagues, and there are other cases where African refugees experience racial abuse at work (Edwards & Ortega, 2016; United Nations, 2015). In Ireland, there are 31% of racism –related issues, 40% of these cases are affiliated with victims being Muslim or African (BBC News, 2017; Department of Industrial and Employment Relations, 2014). Studies have explored challenges of ESL teachers working abroad, and they affirm that issues of racial discrimination are still lingering in developed countries which should be leading in the fight against racial injustices in their societies (Arseneault, 2020; Newton et al., 2020). Yet it is well documented in studies that racial related issues are visible among non-native teachers teaching abroad, most of these studies have claimed that ESL teachers experience difficulties while trying to teach abroad, these difficulties are mainly on issues of injustices at workplace, underpayment, racial abuse and other social injustices (Newton et al., 2020; Rao & Chen, 2020; Schlein, 2020).

Present Study

Literature has shown that issues of racial discrimination in workplaces, as faced by African immigrants, continue to grow rapidly over the years. Some authors have also suggested that while host countries of African migrants ensure adequate employment opportunities for their citizens, employment opportunities with equitable salary scale and appropriate working conditions should be made available for migrants (Kang & Harvey, 2020; Park et al., 2020). Several authors have recognized that proper labor policies should be made to reduce and possibly eliminate issues of racial discrimination among the African teaching workforce in other countries (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020; Starck et al., 2020). Studies of equity in the workplace are well documented, it is also well elaborated in literature that special positions, either administrative or managerial, should not be open for only citizens rather for all in the workforce (Pizarro & Kohli, 2020; Starck et al., 2020). For example, research has provided evidence for the disparity in wages, working hours, and conditions of African immigrant workers (Bastos et al., 2014; Henson et al., 2013; Sheehan et al., 2019). While a lot has been written on social injustices affecting African immigrants, it seems that little has been known with regards to African immigrant ESL teachers teaching young EFL learner at EFL countries. Several questions regarding racial discrimination and social injustice among African ESL teachers teaching in EFL countries to a larger extent remain to be addressed. One way to address these gaps would be to conduct a study that investigates the challenges of African immigrant ESL teachers teaching EFL learners in EFL countries. Additional studies to understand more completely the key tenets of all-inclusive education focusing on African immigrant ESL teachers, especially with regards to racial discrimination related issues, are required. This will assist in ascertaining if these cases of racial discrimination are experienced by African immigrant ESL teachers or not. To discuss this topic thoroughly, 3 research questions were investigated:

1. What are racial discrimination related issues at your workplace as an ESL teacher?
2. What are your opinions as an ESL teacher on racial discrimination at your workplace while teaching English to young EFL learners?
3. What are your personal experiences as an ESL teacher concerning racial discrimination in the workplace while teaching EFL learners?

Method

Research Design

A mixed-method research design that makes use of questionnaires and interviews in collecting both qualitative/quantitative data was adopted for this study. This research design was deemed fit for this study as it will assist in eliciting information from the participants on their experiences and opinion on racial discrimination in the workplace especially as teachers of African descent. The study was carried out over two years to ensure adequate data collection from the participants residing in different EFL countries. Three immigration destinations for African immigrants were chosen for this study: Turkey, North Cyprus, and Luxembourg. The study made use of research assistants for data administration and collection.

Participants

Three groups of participants were recruited for the study; they include African immigrants residing in Turkey, North Cyprus, and Luxembourg. 68 participants were purposively chosen to participate. Inclusion criteria for participants to be selected were:

- All participants must be African immigrants;
- The participants must be residents of Turkey, North Cyprus, or Luxembourg;
- The participants must be English language teachers;
- The teachers must have been teaching English language for a minimum of 5 years;
- All participants must have originated from African ESL countries;
- All participant must provide oral and written consent to participate in the study before its commencement.

During the interview session, the identities of the participants were coded for anonymity purposes as G1 to G23 for participants from Turkey, D1 to D15 for participants from North Cyprus, and B1 to B30 for participants from Luxembourg.

Data Collection

Questionnaires and interviews were the major instruments for data collection. The questionnaires were adapted from the workplace discrimination inventory (WDI) and everyday discrimination scale (EDS). The inventory was restructured and re-worded to meet the objectives of this particular study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part A focused on eliciting information about racial discrimination-related issues in the workplace, while Part B focused on the opinions of participants about racial discrimination in the workplace. Part A was a Likert scale of Always (5) Often (4) Sometimes (3) Rarely (2) Never (1) while part B was a Likert scale of (5) Strongly agree (4) Agree (3) Neutral (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree.

This instrument was face validated by three experts from a private university residing in the three countries adopted for this study. Afterwards, the instrument was piloted with 15 African ESL immigrant teachers residing in North Cyprus who were randomly chosen. After analyzing the result from the pilot study, a Cronbach alpha index of 0.88 was obtained which was an indication that the instrument was reliable to measure what it intended to measure. This was finally adopted as the instrument and utilized for the study.

The interview questions were also reviewed by 2 university lecturers before use. The interview questions were derived from the last research questions which focus on the personal experiences of the participants on racial discrimination at work. 15 participants randomly chosen from the three countries were recruited for the interview session. The researcher

ensured that 5 participants were equally chosen across the 3. They were coded for anonymity. The interview sessions were carried out through the use of Zoom due to the distance between the researcher and the participants. Permission was obtained from the interviewees to record all the sessions before commencing the interview. An extra recorder was used to prevent data loss, and the interview lasted for 2 hours 56mins 20 secs.

Data Analysis
After administering the questionnaire, data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean responses of the participants on the question items. while the interview was analyzed through thematic analysis. The questions were transcribed and analyzed by uncovering themes that occur at regular frequencies. The researcher familiarized himself with the themes, then the themes were coded, analyzed, and presented in tables. The results obtained from the study are presented below.

Findings and Results

RQ 1: What are racial discrimination related issues at your workplace as an ESL teacher?

Table 1: Mean responses on racial discrimination related issues at the workplace

Scale	N	M	SD
Parents of student ask question and complain about my competence	68	4.12	0.32
I am accepted easily by the educational community	68	2.25	1.76
I work more hours than other colleagues at my workplace	68	4.80	0.49
More duties are assigned to me than to other colleagues	68	4.72	0.52
There is a disparity in wages paid to me compared to others	68	4.37	0.54
I experience racism from other colleagues	68	4.52	0.63
I experience racist comments from student	68	4.23	0.58
I am treated differently from others by the management	68	4.54	0.34
I am not promoted like others from a different race or ethnic group	68	2.08	1.72
Labor policies are implemented equitably across all race/ethnic groups	68	2.66	1.34

N: Number of Participants, M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation

Table 1 presents the mean responses of participants on the racial discrimination related issues they faced at their workplace. When the participants were asked the extent to which parents of students asked questions or complained about their competence, a mean value of 4.12 (0.32) was obtained which was an indication that the participants thought that parents of students often did so. With regards to how easily they are accepted by the educational community, a mean value of 2.25 (1.76) was obtained showing that they were rarely accepted by the educational communities of their host countries. In terms of working hours, assigning more duties and disparity in wages paid to African migrant teachers, a mean value of 4.80 (0.49), 4.72 (0.52), and 4.37 (0.54) were obtained which was an indication that the participants experienced these racist attitudes and dispositions at their workplace. Again, with regards to issues of racism by colleagues, racist comments by a student, being treated differently by management, a mean value of 4.52(0.63), 4.23(0.58), and 4.54 (0.34) was obtained for these items.

A mean value of 2.08(1.72) was obtained when the participants were asked if they were promoted as compared with other colleagues. Their response does show that they were not given promotions as compared to other colleagues. With regards to equitability in implementation of labor policies across all races and ethnic groups, a mean value of 2.66 (1.34) was obtained which indicates that there was never fairness and equitability towards the implementation of labor policies in their host countries.

RQ2: What are your opinions as an ESL teacher on racial discrimination in your workplace while teaching English to young EFL learners?

Table 2. Mean responses on opinions of participants on racial discrimination at workplace

Scale	N	M	SD
I can express different opinions without major conflict at work	68	2.50	1.58
I witness issues of racial discrimination at my workplace	68	4.52	0.66
I have problems talking with co-workers who are different from me	68	4.62	0.52
I have problems being listened to by students different from my color	68	4.11	0.42
My students adhere to my instructions while teaching	68	1.80	1.57
I feel comfortable discussing with my students' parents	68	1.19	1.82
My students' parents accept the way I teach their children	68	1.45	1.58
I am treated fairly regardless of my color and identity	68	2.60	1.52
We receive equal wages with other colleagues	68	2.57	1.59
I am treated fairly with regards to extra working hours	68	1.65	1.75

N: Number of Participants, M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation

Table 2 presents the responses of participants on their opinions on racial discrimination in the workplace. The table shows that when the participants were asked if they were able to express different opinions without major conflict at work, a mean value of 2.50 (1.58) was obtained which indicates that they could not express their opinions without conflict at the workplace. With regards to witnessing issues of racial discrimination at the workplace, having problems talking with co-workers different from them, and listening to by students of a different color, a mean value of 4.52(0.66), 4.62(0.55), and 4.11(0.42) was obtained which shows that the participants agreed that they faced racial discriminations at the workplace, had problems talking with co-workers and had issues were students would not listen to them as a result of their color. Also, it is obvious through the table that the participants thought that the students did not adhere to their instructions, the participants did not feel comfortable discussing with parents of student neither did the parents of the student accept the way they teach, a mean value of 1.80(1.57), 1.19(1.82) and 1.45(1.58) was obtained for these items. With regards to being treated fairly in the workplace and receiving equal wages with other colleagues, a mean value of 2.60(1.52) and 2.57(1.59) was obtained for these items which is a suggestion that the participants disagreed on these items. Also, they were not treated fairly with regards to extra working hours at the workplace, a mean value of 1.65(1.75) was obtained which indicates this.

Interview Results

RQ3: What are your personal experiences as an ESL teacher concerning racial discrimination in the workplace while teaching EFL learners?

Table 3. Personal experiences of African ESL teachers concerning racial discrimination in the workplace?

Themes	f
Different labor policies across race/ ethnic group	11
More working hours for African teachers	9
The disparity in wages across race/ ethnic group	9
Acceptance among colleagues	6
Students do not listen to African teachers	8

A careful observation of Table 3 shows that 5 themes were extracted from the interviewees' responses to their experiences about racial discrimination at the workplace. The themes extracted include: different labor policies across race/ ethnic groups; more working hours for African migrant teachers; disparity in wages across race/ ethnic groups; acceptance among colleagues; students listen less to African teachers. The table shows that there were different labor policies across different race and ethnic groups, a further indication of this is shown in the comments of interviewees.

> *It was so glaring that they implemented different labor laws on us because of our race and color… this is unacceptable* (G20).
>
> *…a lot has been said about racial discrimination but it is obvious that their labor laws do not replicate that* (G17).
>
> *while protecting jobs for your citizens, you must take care of the working class regardless of their color and race but this is practiced here (*B26).

Again, while the participants complained about the differences in labor policy across race and ethnic groups, they emphasized that it was so evident that they work for longer hours than others in the same workplace yet most labor policies tend to favor others.

> *We are here working for longer hours and yet we get little or nothing as pay compared to our colleagues with similar competence and qualification like us, they get well paid* (D14).
> *We are not different in any way, we all are humans and deserve to be treated fairly, I put in more hours at the workplace than my colleagues yet it seemed they are better favored than me, this demotivates me but there is nothing I can do about it* (D1).
>
> *It is unfair to think that we put in more working hours as compared to our colleagues yet they get a fair wage than us, yet most policies favor them, this is not appropriate* (G4).

It was obvious that the African migrant teachers put in longer working hours yet they feel cheated by the labor policies. Their comments were pointers to the fact that despite the long

hours of work, there were issues of wage disparity. An interviewee narrated his ordeal with regards to wages:

> *I worked severally in a lot of institutions here and it is so clear that there are differences in the wages of migrants especially blacks as compared to the white. I worked in a school and they paid me less regardless of my qualification as a Master of Art holder and while I was embarking on my Ph.D. program. I was seriously underpaid and made to work more than colleagues with little or no qualifications. I can say that I was competent and qualified to be the head-teacher yet the head-teacher had only B.SC in education which was equivalent to my BSC (ED) that I had.* (D15).

By and large, the issues of racial discrimination continue in our society as experienced by the interviewees. There are also cases where students of color do not adhere to instructions of African migrant teachers. Sometimes there were cases where students even made racist and derogatory comments to the African migrant teachers and when reported to the school management, appropriate disciplinary measures were not taken to inhibit such attitudes and dispositions.

> *I constantly experienced students disregarding my instructions while I was teaching and nothing was done when this was reported to the management (D15).*
>
> *The management always have a way to deal nicely with issues of racism, disobedience, and disrespect to African teachers (D8).*
>
> *I was constantly called an abusive name by some of the students especially when I give simple instruction while teaching (G8).*
>
> *Students call me "Arap" which means slave in Turkish language and this was very disrespectful yet the management implements little or no disciplinary measures (D10).*
>
> *I am often being neglected when I give certain instructions, most times I threaten to call other white skin teachers when they disrespect me. This shows that they are more scared of the white teacher than we black, that's terrible (D8).*
>
> *Students often write me derogatory emails and when I report this to management, they often do nothing to mitigate this act (D18).*
>
> *Students neglect my instructions and in most cases report to higher departmental officers who write me to question my actions instead of reprimanding them for their unruly actions (G22).*
>
> *I must say that this country accepts all race and ethnics into their workforce, there is little or nothing about racial issues here to be honest (B4).*

A careful and critical review of these comments does show that issues of racial discrimination at the workplace, especially in our educational institutions are prevalent regardless of the calls by non-governmental agencies to end racism in our societies.

Discussion

From the data, key findings emerge. The findings show that the participants thought that parents of students often question and complain about their competence. These results go beyond previous reports, showing that such racial discrimination exists and is usually experienced by African immigrant teachers (Bastos et al., 2014; Kang & Harvey, 2020). It was evident that ESL learners do not listen to their African immigrant ESL teachers as a result of their color which invariably would result in negligence to teacher's instructions as well. While this is a novel finding, literature on social injustices has failed to capture this. Surprisingly the study was able to show that African migrant ESL teachers were uncomfortable discussing with their students' parents. While this may be new, it is well documented in studies that inability of host communities of immigrants to accept immigrants into their society affects the level of workplace acceptance and integration among immigrants, especially Africans (Esses, 2020; Mosuga, 2020; Tesfai & Thomas, 2020). This study presumes that this lackadaisical attitude towards acceptance of African immigrants into societies may be likely reason for the discomfort experienced by African ESL immigrant teachers while discussing with the students' parents. More clearly, this presumption is reliant on another remarkable finding of this study which pinpoints that African immigrant teachers were of the perception that their students' parents do not accept the way they teach their children. Yet clearly, studies have shown that there is no justification that the ability to teach is dependent on issues of color, race, gender or immigration status (Dee, 2005; Parks & Kennedy, 2007). These were some novel findings of this study.

Our findings on issues like acceptance of African teachers by the educational community, assigning more duties, and disparity in wages paid to African immigrant teachers, at least hint and support the opinion of similar studies that these issues exist at the workplace (Henson et al., 2013; Sinclair & Warikoo, 2020). This suggests that there is the possibility of racial discrimination among colleagues at a workplace and the present study confirmed the findings of this as there were issues of racism by colleagues, racist comments by the students which is in tandem with the findings of similar studies asserting that some African immigrants do experience racial abuse by their colleagues at the workplace (Park et al., 2020; Sinclair & Warikoo, 2020). Again, it was indicated that in a country like Luxembourg, racial related issues especially as it concerns African immigrant teacher are at the barest minimum. Furthermore, the study unveiled that African teachers were being treated differently by management as a similar conclusion was reached by other studies which suggest same treatments are observed in some workplaces abroad (Bastos et al., 2014; Henson et al., 2013; Sheehan et al., 2019). Another finding was that African teachers were not given equal promotion as compared with their colleagues at the same workplace and this is consistent with what has been found in previous studies that there are usually disparities with regards to the promotion of immigrants to a particular position as such positions are only reserved for citizens (DeCuir-Gunby, 2020; Kang & Harvey, 2020). Generally, it seems that labor policies did not favor African teachers teaching abroad. Overall, these findings are in tandem with findings reported by statistics and studies carried out on immigration policies and racially related issues across Europe (Park et al., 2020; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020).

It is obvious that the issue of racial discrimination is existent even in our educational systems as teachers of color continue to be victims of these racial dispositions by colleagues, students, and the management. It could be deduced through the comments of the interviewees that African teachers teaching abroad were disadvantaged in many ways while teaching in most European schools despite the continuous call to put an end to racism in the society. This result highlights that though little is being written with regards to racial discrimination among African teachers, the results of this study show that a lot of racial issues exist among African immigrant teachers who are well qualified and experienced yet facing racial discrimination at their workplace. This study upholds that such discrimination does not foster an all-inclusive education which is essential in 21st-century society and thus needs implementation of serious measures to curb these societal inequalities.

Conclusion /Recommendations

The aim of the study was to examine workplace racial discrimination issues among African immigrant teachers in a bid to determine possible ways of enhancing an all-inclusive education for all. The author concluded that African immigrant teachers who are well experienced and qualified experience issues of racial discrimination at the workplace. In summary, this paper argued that though immigrant African ESL teachers are well qualified, they are not promoted like other colleagues at their workplace and while putting in longer hours of work, disparities in wages exist at the workplace with Luxemburg as an exception. In conclusion, it would appear that the labor policies of these host countries are not fairly implemented across different racial and ethnic backgrounds rather enforced to favor their citizen. This allows the conclusion that most host countries formulate labor policies that would favor their citizens more than African immigrants.

Reasonable as it may seem, there is a need to ensure that societies of these immigrants are politically and economically stable to reduce the level at which individuals immigrate from one place to another. Proper labor policies should be formulated to promote the right of African immigrants and other immigrants so that issues of racial discrimination and abuses at workplaces will be reduced to minimal. The remaining issues are subject to fairness as there is a need for immigrant African teachers to be treated fairly among their colleagues at a workplace, after all, works of literature have shown that a correlation does not exist between race and workplace performance. This further validates the conclusion that while there is a need for special workplace positions to be reserved for citizens, competent African immigrants or other immigrants should be allowed to occupy such position and encouraged to work with other towards achieving organizational goals. More generally, issues of racial discrimination should be frowned at especially while fostering an all-inclusive educational system that provides appropriate/conducive teaching and learning environment for all; both for the learner and the teachers.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study was the sample size of the participants which was relatively small. Also, studies should be conducted which would discuss issues of workplace discrimination among African immigrant teachers teaching at different countries in different continents, this would give a better world perspective on this topic. Again, this study was a perception-based study and like every other perception based studies, perceptions of participants can be influenced by other groups or may lead to a situation where the perceived may not be the factual.

Acknowledgement

Special thanks to all the participants that participated during this research, I really do appreciate your efforts. Special thanks to participants from North Cyprus, Turkey and Luxembourg. A special thanks to Prof Mohammad Kesharvaz for your constant encouragement and advice.

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Exploring the Potentials of Robotics in Supporting Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Abstract

Technological advances have facilitated robots to perform a variety of human-like functions which have steered the interest of educators, researchers, and practitioners to discover the potential advantage of using robots as an intervention for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Through meta-analysis, this study provides research-based information with regards to the potentials of robotics in supporting children with the disorder, particularly with regard to their skills and its implications to their learning performance. A total of twenty-five peer-reviewed articles published in international journals are included - the majority of them use humanoid robots with social skills as the focus of their study. The majority of these articles declare the commendable potentiality of utilizing robots in supporting children with autism spectrum disorder to improve their target skills and enhance their present level of performance. It is recommended that future studies could investigate the use of robotics in an inclusive educational setting focused on the supervision and improvement of cognitive-behavioral skills of children under the spectrum.

Keywords: autism, humanoid, learning performance, meta-analysis, robots

Introduction

The World Health Organization [WHO] defines autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as a gamut of mild to severe conditions with "impaired social behavior, communication and language, and a narrow range of interests and activities that are both unique to the individual and carried out repetitively" (WHO, 2019, para 1). The prevalence of young learners being diagnosed with ASD continues to rise every year. This could be accounted for by expanded diagnostic criteria, improved assessment tools, or even increased societal awareness that several advocacy groups have championed over the last decades. The WHO (2019), in particular, published that one in 160 children is identified as having ASD, which concerns countries in the world regardless of economic stability or degree of industrialization. In the United States of America, an estimate of 222 per 10,000 children have the said condition, for Asian countries like Japan and China, there are 181 and 23 in 10,000 children, while for European territories comprising Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany, it is approximated that 60, 48, and 38 in 10, 000 children are detected of manifesting ASD respectively (Elflein, 2020).

In the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM 5*), the most recent edition that the American Psychiatric Association has released, ASD is described as a neurodevelopmental condition manifesting persistent deficits in social competence and notable recurring behaviors that significantly affect the other domains of functioning (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Considering these characteristics, it can be concluded that implications could be present in the learning performance of children with ASD. Their lack of socio-emotional reciprocity can hamper special and general education teachers from making collaborative learning feasible. Due to the existence of stereotyped motor movements in some children with ASD and the manifestation of difficulties in processing sensory information, acquiring meaningful academic experience could be challenging for them. This is confirmed in the work of Sanz-Cervera et al. (2017), declaring that children who are diagnosed with ASD are more likely to display issues related to sensory and higher functioning in the school settings. The struggles of children with ASD to receive and respond to a specific sensory stimulus may impact their academic performance and learning experiences in school.

A study by Kumazaki et al. (2019) claimed that children who have ASD often deliver better performance when a robot is present and is accompanied by a human partner. The results of this research revealed an intensified social communication ability of the participants involved, whose ages ranged from five to six. This situation pushes both the special education and general education teachers in trying several pedagogical methods to stop this from happening. Extended efforts are even being exhausted outside school hours to assure families that teachers are doing their job the best way possible. Evidence-based techniques are being tested one after another to ascertain that no children with ASD would be left behind, resulting in teachers and researchers exploring the potentiality of technology-driven interventions. Several experts have already seen this enormous invasion of technology in special and inclusive education as a powerful tool. Specifically, the help of assistive devices such as sensory aids, computer software, and augmentative and alternative communication has shown some effectiveness in improving the present level of functioning of students with special needs. Learners with ASD benefit also from other latest advancements in technology such as robotics, as it enables children in the spectrum to respond to feedbacks when exposed to social contexts and interactive settings. Robotics are progressively becoming the center of attention in the realm of educational and clinical research. It is now being used to assist children with ASD, and studies are revealing positive reviews regarding this matter.

On the other hand, like any other emerging tool or technique, robotics is criticized for its limitations in transferring skills and supporting learners with ASD to succeed in school further. Citing the work of Alcorn et al. (2019), arguments were given focusing on three conclusive points: robots being perceived as unspontaneous yet freely participative in responses; robots performing a similar function to existing tools and, therefore, seen as indifferent to what teachers are currently using in the classroom; and the need for robots to be subjected to personalization depending on the curricular aims to target prior its adoption. The argument raised in this research somewhat balances the overwhelming remarks of other researchers in the utilization of specified technology in the classroom. The same authors emphasize that although the use of robots is likely to deliver intricate cost-benefit trade-offs and might intensify the readiness level of children to process information, it may also inhibit them from interacting with their teachers and peers, thus leaving a gap for educators and practitioners to decide if robotics could realistically result in statistically significant outcomes in the learning process of children with ASD, especially in the context of inclusive education.

The identified gap and the mixed results disclosed above paved the way for the present researchers to conduct a systematic review of literature. Considering the newly available studies focusing on robotics from 2016 to the present, the researchers examined the possible implications of its effect on the learning performance of children under the spectrum with the perspective that even though ASD is not a learning disability, it can still impact on students' learning. The consolidated peer-reviewed research studies were thoroughly scrutinized to explore the possibilities of employing robotics in inclusive educational and clinical settings. Hence, the following specific questions were asked:

(1) What is the typology of the robots used in assisting children with ASD in terms of type, target age of the participant/s, and the participants' level of disability?
(2) What are the effects of robotics in supporting children with ASD?;
(3) What could be the implications of these effects to the learning performance of children with ASD?

Methodology

This study was conducted using the meta-analysis method through the accumulation of information, knowledge, and research findings. According to Gurevitch et al. (2018), meta-analysis has two distinct central goals, and the first "is to assess the evidence for the effectiveness of specific interventions…often over a relatively small number of studies (fewer than about 25). The second, quite different, fundamental goal is to reach broad generalizations across larger numbers of study outcomes" (p. 176). The researchers systematically combined significant data from several articles selected to develop more complex analyses and come up with several inferences and conclusions. Several international studies with valid and reliable results were included following the inclusion criteria. The goal of employing meta-analysis as a research method was taken into consideration in this current study to establish pertinent results and recommendations. Consequently, this research examined 25 studies in total that explored the potentials of robotics in supporting children with ASD, the latter goal was intended to appraise how robotics could be an impactful tool in involving children under the spectrum in the general education setting. The study, likewise, aimed to "estimate the heterogeneity of the effects, which indicates the consistency of the effect across studies" (Cheung & Vijayakumar, 2016, p. 122).

Inclusion Criteria
The criteria used for studies that were included in this recent study are:

(a) it has to be an article published in a peer-reviewed journal;
(b) its publication should be between 2016 -2020;
(c) at least one participant of the study is a child with ASD;
(d) the study used robotics in supporting child/ren with ASD;
(e) there is/are specific skill/s for improvement addressed in the study.

Data Analysis
The appropriate form specifically designed for this study was developed by the researchers. This form examined individual studies found in the research, aligned with meta-analysis and its suitability, compared the studies, and determined the statistical information and narrative data used in the research. Homogeneity was determined and differences between the studies were analyzed. The result sections of the included papers were examined for recurring ideas in the findings that were stated as criteria for potentials. These findings were analyzed using a meta-summary technique. Recurring ideas in the findings were labeled into criteria for potentials and the frequency of the found criteria was examined. This was done to develop a more accurate appraisal of the support of robotics to children with ASD in terms of skill development and its implication to their learning performance despite their sensory processing difficulty. Different variables were identified in which the potentials of robotics in supporting children with ASD were addressed. Analyses of these variables were made, and their results were reported. In this research, the authors focused not on the statistical significance of individual studies, but on the magnitude of the effects of robots in supporting children with ASD.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1. What is the typology of the robots used in assisting children with ASD in terms of (a) type and (b) target age and level of disability?

Table 1: Characteristics of Robots and the Participants

Study Number	Author	Type/Given Name of Robot	Participant	
			Age	**Level**
1.	Aryania et al. (2020)	Humanoid robot (Arc)	Nine to 11 years old	With high-functioning ASD and intelligence quotient scores of ≥70
2.	Berk-Smeekens et al. (2020)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Three to eight years old	With total intelligence quotient scores of ≥70
3.	Pennazio & Fedeli (2019)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Nine years old	With high-functioning ASD, but with cognitive and language deficits
4.	Zhang et al. (2019)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Five to eight years old	With intelligence quotient of 104.90
5.	Conti et al. (2018)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Five to 10 years old	With concomitant manifestations of mild to profound intellectual disability

6.	Desideri et al. (2018)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Nine years old	With severe to profound ASD due to intellectual disability and hearing loss
7.	Feng, Y., Jia, Q. & Wei, W. (2018)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Five to six years old	Not specified
8.	Koch (2018)	Humanoid robot	Five to 12 years old	With concomitant manifestations of no to mild cognitive impairment
9.	Kumazaki et al. (2017)	Humanoid robots - Tele-operated	10 to 17 years old	With high-functioning ASD
10.	Mengoni et al. (2017)	Humanoid robot (KASPAR-Kinesics and Synchronisation in Personal Assistant Robotics)	Five to 10 years old	With intelligence quotient scores of ≥70
11.	Palestra et al. (2017)	Humanoid robot (Nao)	Eight to 19 years old	With verbal and/or nonverbal ASD
12.	Schadenberg et al. (2019)	Humanoid robot (Zeno)	Five to 12 years old	With moderate ASD
13.	Scassellati et al. (2018)	Social robot	Six to 12 years old	With nonverbal intelligence quotient scores of ≥70 (as determined by the Differential Ability Scales)
14.	Pennazio (2017)	Social robot (IROMEC - Interactive Robotic Social Mediators as Companions)	Not specified	With profound ASD
15.	Simut et al. (2016)	Social robot (Probo)	Five to seven years old	With intelligence quotient scores of ≥70 and performance level of 80 % in a preference under- standing task
16.	Attawibulkul et al. (2018)	Automatic mobile robot (Bliss)	Four to 12 years old	With scores of ≥ 18 in Pervasive Developmental Disorder Screening Questionnaire
17.	Valadão et al. (2016)	Automatic mobile robot (Maria)	Seven to eight years old	Not specified
18.	Kumazaki et al. (2018)	CommU robot	Five to six years old	Not specified
19.	Lebersfeld et al. (2019)	Animal-like robot (SAM - Socially Animated Machine); monkey	Four to 14 years old	With severe to high average cognitive abilities
20.	Bharatharaj et al. (2017)	Animal-like robot (KiliRo) System Architecture; parrot)	Six to 16 years old	Not specified

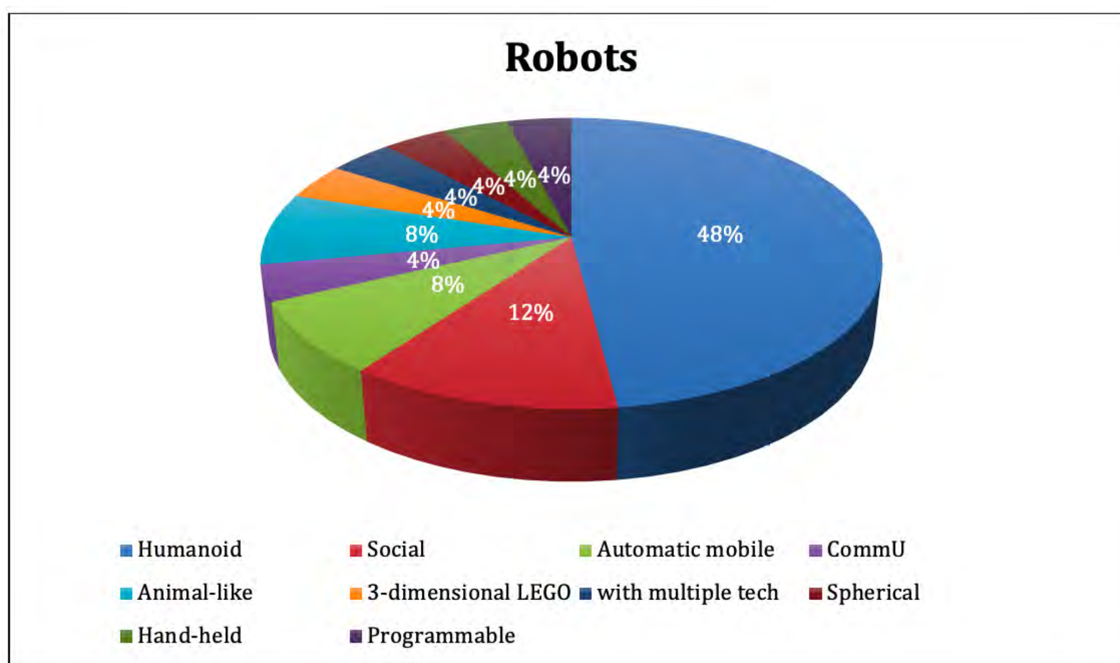
21.	Fachantidis et al. (2020)	Three-dimensional educational Lego robot	Nine years old	With concomitant manifestations of dysgraphia
22.	Kärnä, E., Dindar, K. & Hu, X. (2020)	Robots with multiple technology	Six to 12 years old	With concomitant manifestations of intellectual disability
23.	Kostrubiec, V. & Kruck, J. (2020)	Spherical prototype robot	Five to 10 years old	With low-functioning ASD
24.	Knight, V., Wright, J. & DeFreese, A. (2020)	Hand-held smart robot (Ozobot)	10 years old	With mild to moderate ASD and concomitant manifestations of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and emotional behavior disorder.
25.	Albo-Canals et al. (2018)	Programmable toy robot (Kibo)	Six to 14 years old	With severe ASD and cognitive impairments

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the robots and the participants of the study. From the 25 articles reviewed, it can be seen that different kinds of robots were used to provide support to children with ASD.

As regards the kinds of robots used, Figure 1 shows that 12 or 48% of the articles utilized humanoid robots in their experiments in handling children with ASD, such as Nao, Arc, Zeno, and KASPAR, and tele-operated robots. Typically, a humanoid robot has a physical appearance that is very appealing to children as it resembles the features of a small child and is also attentive to children (Ismail et al., 2019). Furthermore, Pennazio and Fedeli (2019) emphasized that humanoid robots with favorably interactive features can elicit more responses from children with ASD in terms of distinguishing and duplicating emotions. The presence of a robot resembling a human person, in this case, a small child, is important for children with ASD since they are generally characterized as having deficits in social skills. These robots can function as a playmate and companion to these children and can contribute to the development of their social skills. Cho and Ahn (2016) stated that technologically designed robots could develop suitable social interaction skills and behaviors among students.

The other types used were social robots, automatic mobile robots, animal-like robots, Lego robots, toy robots, CommU robots, and robots that can be held and programmed with multiple technologies. These types normally resemble animals or toys that children with ASD are familiar with. According to Cho and Ahn (2016), the robots may be presented in various designs provided that the purpose for their use is identified to target the deficits of children with ASD, such as improving concentration, facilitating joint attention, and modeling appropriate social behavior.

Moreover, the participants of the articles reviewed were children with ASD from ages three to 19 years old. They had either mild/moderate to severe/profound intellectual ability, low to high functioning ASD, verbal or non-verbal ASD, with cognitive and language impairments, dysgraphia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and emotional disorder.



Research Question 2. What are the effects of robotics in supporting children with ASD?

Table 2: Robotics and Its Effects on the Targeted Skills of Children with ASD

Research Number	Targeted Skill/s	Effects
1.	Social (engagement behavior)	Child–robot interaction improved the social engagement of some children diagnosed under the spectrum.
2.	Social and Emotional (treatment adherence, child affect, and likability)	With the aid of the robot, participants displayed adherence during the treatment protocol and positive child affect. Also, commendable likability scores were noted due to robot movements, speech, and games.
3.	Cognitive and Social (emotional ability and self-confidence)	The humanoid robot and the further virtual interaction through avatars represented a highly adaptive method to simulate social stories that engaged the child on a cognitive and emotional level.
4.	Social (learn distrust and deception)	Involvement of humanoid robots in social rules training for children with ASD had a notable potential.
5.	Social (eye gaze, imitation, and educator involvement)	Four out of six participants exhibited progress in all the variables before and after the robot training. Only two participants struggled during the experiment due to the presence of a profound intellectual disability.
6.	Social and Language (vocal imitation, motor imitation, expressive language, receptive language, react to name, and spontaneous request)	The robot gave different effects on the participants involved in the study. The improvement level from baseline to post-intervention of the two participants varied depending on the variable tested.
7.	Social (robot awakes children's interest/attention by dancing, singing, dialogue, etc.)	Robot-assisted intervention, through the proposed control architecture, was considered efficient and successful in strengthening the socialization skills of the participants with ASD.

8.	Social and Emotional	Findings disclosed unfailing high ratings of happiness, improved comfort ratings, and only slightly declined ratings of desire for further interactions through time.
9.	Social (interaction / response)	The suitability of specific robot types (on the levels of ASD) and appearance (more human-like humanoid robots over mechanical or mascot-like) were preferred for therapeutic use.
10.	Social	The robot gave positive effects, offering the children the possibility to improve their social skills.
11.	Social and Language (social communication and social skills)	The presence of a robot helped facilitate in prompting triadic relations in ASD.
12.	Social (interaction)	Design of deliberate robot behavior and autonomy over the robot's behavior encouraged engagement and enabled more learning prospects for children with ASD.
13.	Social	The joint attention and communication competence of the participants were enhanced as the robot encouraged engagement.
14.	Social (eye contact, touch, facial expressions, human interaction)	The participant exhibited a remarkable increase in joint eye contact and facial expressions. Significant touch was also recorded, as the participant showed interest in hugging the robot. Imitation and interaction with the robot, teacher, and peers were demonstrated, which validated the affirmative effects of the robot in enhancing human interaction.
15.	Social and Language (eye contact, initiating joint attention, verbal utterances, positive affect, no-response, evading task behaviors)	No other significant differences were attained for the following: initiating joint attention, verbal utterances, positive affect, no-response, and evading task behaviors. Therefore, the robot showed a significant difference in an eye-contact variable when juxtaposed to the human partner.
16.	Cognitive (theory of mind and attention time)	There was no significant difference in supporting the theory of mind and the attention time during the session. However, the response time of the participants with the BLISS robot was shorter compared to when the robot was not present, which gave the parents an easier job when doing the storytelling activity.
17.	Social	The robot was useful in improving both the socialization and general quality of life potentials of the participants.
18.	Social	The children's interaction with robot CommU displayed better Joint Attention (JA) tasks with a human.
19.	Social (child's enjoyment, motivation, and willingness to interact)	Robot-based interventions were useful for skills acquisition of children with ASD because they found it encouraging and interesting.
20.	Cognitive, Social, and Language (Learning and social interaction abilities)	Generally, participants showed a gradual increase in terms of their satisfaction (happiness) level and degree of social interaction.
21.	Social, Language, and Emotional	The use of educational robotics was a promising tool to develop the social, communicational, and emotional skills of children with ASD.
22.	Social and Cognitive	The use of adaptable technologies during educational activities offered wide-ranging opportunities for the participants to practice communication and interaction skills.

23.	Social	The robot's sensory rewards produced more positive reactions from the participants compared to the verbal praises from humans. Likewise, educators had a positive view/attitude towards robotic support for evidence-based practice on children diagnosed with ASD.
24.	Psychomotor (acquisition of three skills: calibrating, drawing track lines, and coding)	The participant demonstrated the ability to reach 100% precision for all the skills tested. Further, he was able to generalize the coding skills to a novel exemplar with 100% correctness.
25.	Social	The participants were able to play individually and control the robot, which implied impressive engagement. Moreover, the children connected well with the adults present inside the room.

Table 2 reveals the targeted skills in all the articles gathered and the effects disclosed after the exposure of the participants to robots. In terms of skills, it could be seen that there were studies that addressed multiple skills in one research and others focused only on a specific skill. Considering the 25 studies included in this meta-analysis, 23 examined the use of robotics in supporting the social performance of children in the ASD category. This was more than three-fourths of the total number of papers analyzed for this present research. This was followed with language and cognitive skills, which were only directed in five and four studies, respectively.

Children who are diagnosed with ASD are known for their recognizable deficiencies in socialization, mainly in the aspect of socio-emotional reciprocity, interaction, and nonverbal communicative behaviors. The diagnostic criteria in DSM 5 support this as it accentuates the "persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts" among children with ASD (APA, 2013, p. 50). This is followed by specific manifestations to clearly characterize people with the said condition, such as lack of eye gaze or contact, restricted imitation skills, reduced adherence, limited engagement, rigid emotions, and poor facial expressions. Remarkably, these manifestations were purposely targeted under social skills in some of the studies counted in this meta-analysis. This allowed the participants included in these studies to be more able regardless of their restraints, in establishing age-appropriate social competence. The intention to improve the most problematic skill among children with ASD gave an array of opportunities for them to attain a higher level of functional performance.

Concerning the language and communication skills, Wittke et al. (2017) indicated that children who are diagnosed with ASD may also manifest impairments or problems in language, predominantly in the component of pragmatics. More so, the presence of language delays among students in the spectrum is normal (Marrus et al., 2018) considering the struggles they are experiencing in processing language codes and in analyzing the social context of the situation. In relation to the cognitive skills, the inability to understand information and learn concepts is not listed as diagnostic criteria for ASD. Still, it cannot be disregarded that there are students with ASD who struggle in maximizing their executive functioning, such as planning, problem-solving, and reasoning (Center for Autism Research, 2020). These aforementioned arguments validate the language and cognitive problems of people with ASD, and therefore, being used as variables in some of the accumulated robotics-based studies can further fulfill the potentials of this disability population, particularly when the results of these studies gave general positive effects after the introduction of the robots to children with ASD.

The majority of the 25 articles declared the commendable potentiality of utilizing robots in supporting children with ASD. This technology-driven tool can improve the target skills and enhance the present level of performance of the individual studied. This finding is similar to all types of robots. The overall effects verify the applicability of robots in handling children with ASD, irrespective if the robots appear with humanoid features, automatic mobile elements, social components, animal-like structure, or spherical prototype. The study by Feng et al. (2018) highlighted not just the effectiveness of a robot-assisted intervention in intensifying the socialization skills of the participants, but also the decreased responsibilities of the supervisors or teachers in assisting children. This also aligns with the results of Scassellati et al. (2018) who mentioned the strengthened communication abilities and attention span of the participants with ASD, which included alleviated prompts of the caregiver since the existence of the robot during tasks. The social interaction and engagement of the participants were also enhanced during or after the sessions (Aryania et al., 2020; Bharatharaj et al., 2017; Kärnä et al., 2020; Palestra et al., 2017; Schadenberg et al., 2019), which contributes to the possible adaptation of robots in an environment where children with ASD are placed for therapy, education, or even in independent training. However, some studies provided limitations about the effects of a robotics-based intervention on children with ASD. The research of Desideri et al. (2018) specified that robots do not have an analogous degree of effect, as the conducted experiments produced varied results by the participants. Conti et al. (2018) agreed, as two of the six children with ASD included in their experiments encountered difficulties due to profound intellectual disability. Furthermore, the studies of Simut et al. (2016) and Attawibulkul et al. (2018) mentioned that the possible restriction of robotics can also include the definite skills to be addressed as no improvements were seen in the following: initiating joint attention, verbal utterances, positive affect, no-response, evading task behaviors, and supporting the theory of mind. These data with marginal differences between the pre-and post-intervention imply that the effects of robotics-based intervention may be dissimilar and reliant on the severity of the condition and the subskills under a target skill.

Research Question 3. What could be the implications of these effects on the learning performance of children with ASD?

Aside from the applicability of robots for therapy-related concerns, the results show an evident and effective way to facilitate different skills for children with ASD. Many different skills were targeted in the majority of studies scrutinized for this research. As a result, there is a significant increase in the previously seen problematic subskills of the participants.

Children with ASD find it difficult to communicate and interact with other people. With the premise that effective learning and teaching presumes effective social communication, the studies substantiated that the enhancement of socialization skills and communicative intents of children with the presence of robots is significant for the effective learning of students with ASD. The results show significant improvement in the interaction with humans after the interaction with robots, which equates to more successful communication and interaction which is the main concern of children with ASD. During educational activities, robots provide children with ASD with a variety of opportunities to practice communication and interaction skills. This may be regarded as key to better learning performance since it has been established that there is a significant correlation between communication in the classroom and academic performance of students (Fernandes, 2019). Based on the different articles examined, several factors contribute to the increase in performance of children with ASD in the classroom. An increase in motivation and attention is emphasized in many of the studies. Children with ASD are more motivated and more attracted to robots, which is useful for skill acquisition

(Lebersfeld et al., 2019). The attractive appearances of the humanoid robot seem to get more attention from children with ASD and help prevent fearfulness. This leads to a more engaging interaction where even if the attention time maybe the same, even without the robot, the response time is shorter (Attawibulkul et al., 2018), which will establish more interaction and learning.

Through the use of robots, there is an evident improvement in communication and social interaction. As a result, challenging behaviors that may limit the facilitation of learning are significantly lessened (Fachantidis et al., 2020). In relation to this, the result of interaction with robots is in the aspect of attention. Children with ASD give more attention to other people, following their previous experience of interacting with robots (Kumazaki et al., 2018).

The use of robots is an effective way to facilitate social skills for children with ASD, thus leading to the improvement of social skills and eliciting effective interactions. For instance, eye-contact is strengthened when the robot is partnered with a human (Simut et al., 2016). Interaction with robots promotes better adjustment to and understanding of change in what is happening in the surroundings, and this helps in better understanding of situations and in promoting learning in children with ASD (Pennazio & Fedeli, 2019).

Fundamentally, what is interesting to note is that robotics, aside from the improvements in socialization and improvement in learning performance, is useful for the improvement of the quality of life (Valadão et al., 2016) and satisfaction (happiness) level (Bharatharaj et al., 2017) of children with ASD.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The growing population of children diagnosed with ASD has been a pressing concern of educators and practitioners, which has led them to explore ways to create programs and interventions to improve the adaptive and functional skills of these children. One of the promising tools in therapeutic and educational interventions for children with ASD is the application of robotics. This perspective motivated the present researchers to conduct a meta-analysis to explore the potentials of robotics in supporting children with ASD and to determine its possible implications to the children’s learning performance.

Based on the analysis of the identified variables in the current study, the researchers concluded that humanoid robots were largely used in experimental studies included in this meta-analysis for children with ASD irrespective of ages, levels of disability, and target skills. This robot typology was most likely appealing to the participants because of its physical appearance resembling the features of a child which may have been perceived as a playmate and companion that help prevent fear in interacting with others, thus contributing to the development and/or improvement of their social skills. Likewise, social skills were remarkably the foci of most of the studies conducted relative to the use of robotics in supporting children with ASD, followed by language and cognitive skills. The authors of the reviewed articles noted that technologically driven tools, such as robotics, have a commendable potentiality as an intervention in improving the target skills and in enhancing the present level of performance of the understudied. Although humanoid robots were mostly preferred, similar positive outcomes were attained with the other types of robots in the studies conducted, which implies that a robot with appropriately designed features according to its purpose, regardless of appearance, can be used as an intervention in supporting children with ASD. Moreover, the improved social, language, and cognitive skills of the children with ASD using robotics as intervention also indicate a

promising effect on their learning performance. Notably, the development of these skills has an impact on the learners' performance during the teaching and learning process since these could increase their ability to interact, establish positive relationships, communicate, pay attention, and improve self-esteem – factors that are highly necessary for improving their functional skills and learning performance. The robots can aid in increasing the motivation and attention of the students with ASD and provide them with a variety of activities to engage, communicate, and respond during educational activities.

Lastly, future research could delve into the use of robotics in an inclusive educational setting focused on the supervision and improvement of cognitive-behavioral abilities of students with ASD since literature is scarce in this aspect. Additionally, future studies may also investigate the use of robotics for a specific level of severity of the disability and subskills under a target skill/domain.

It is the hope of educators, practitioners, and researchers that various interventions being studied and implemented such as robotics will not only develop and enhance the adaptive, functional, and cognitive skills, and learning performance of the students with ASD, but most importantly to better their state of life that would eventually allow them to experience happiness in their existence.

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Exploring Implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines in Private Secondary Schools

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Abstract

The implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines in Malawi began in 2009. There is limited literature on how the guidelines are implemented in secondary schools, particularly in private secondary schools of Malawi. Therefore, the study aimed at exploring the implementation of the guidelines in private secondary schools. The study used a phenomenological design and qualitative methodology. Data were generated through a triangulation of methods including semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis. The data generated were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that there was a lack of thorough knowledge of the guidelines, resources for implementing the guidelines in private secondary schools were not available, and support for learners with special education needs was not sufficient. The results of this study indicate that communication with key school stakeholders is key for the effective implementation of the National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines.

Keywords: inclusive education, private secondary schools and policy, special needs education

Education is a human right for all people. To realise this right, Malawi has made a number of significant efforts. The National Special Needs Education Policy Guidelines (NSNEPG) have been formulated to guide the implementation of inclusive education (IE) at all levels of education. The government formulated the NSNEPG in 2009, which are aimed at regulating provision of education to learners with special education needs (SEN). This action by the government indicates that it values special needs education (SNE). Before the development of NSNEPG, Malawi had the National Special Needs Education Policy (NSEP) which was introduced in 2007. The NSEP provided a framework for SNE in Malawi (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2007).

The NSNEPG were developed to support the implementation of the NSEP (MoE, 2009). This is in tandem with global trends that advocate for implementation of inclusive education (IE). International legal frameworks such as the Salamanca Statement concerning SNE advocacy for IE (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994). The NSNEPG are meant to guide all stakeholders providing SNE (MoE, 2009).

The NSNEPG have six objectives. The first objective is to provide appropriate quality education and/or vocational training to all learners with SEN. Secondly, the NSNEPG are aimed at ensuring equitable access to education for all learners with SEN at all educational levels. Thirdly, the policy guidelines aim at providing education facilities with necessary provisions to support the education of learners with SEN. Another objective is to ensure that all education institutions create and provide supportive learning environments. Furthermore, the NSNEPG aim to increase provision of SNE services by all education stakeholders. In addition, the NSNEPG seek to improve co-ordination and networking among SNE stakeholders. The last objective is to provide standards and ethical practices to be adhered to in the provision of SNE services in Malawi (MoE, 2009).

In order to effectively guide the stakeholders of SNE, the NSNEPG have spelled out four major needs of learners with SEN. Learners with SEN need a conducive learning environment (the classroom should be well maintained, ventilated, effectively maintained and well equipped). The second need is modified teaching, learning and assessment resources. The content and ways of teaching must accommodate the needs of each learner. Another need of learners with SEN is specialised assistive devices such as hearing aids, wheel chairs, and others. The last need spelled out in the NSNEPG is regular medical check-ups (MoE, 2009).

The NSNEPG have three priority areas. The first priority area is referred to as access and equity. The policy under that section states that the MoE shall promote easy access to education at all levels for learners with SEN, eliminate the imbalances between learners with SEN and those without, put in place systems for early identification assessment and placement of individuals requiring SNE, bring awareness to the public about individuals with disabilities and their right to education and ensure that learners with SEN receive adequate care and support services. The objectives and strategies are outlined in the policy (MoE, 2009).

The second priority area is quality and relevance. It is stated that the Ministry of Education shall establish and maintain agreed minimum standards for the provision of quality education for learners with SEN and ensure that the national curriculum responds to the needs of learners with SEN. The third priority area is about governance and management. It is stipulated that the MoE shall ensure that SNE has a proper governance and management structure (MoE, 2009). The policy guidelines also contain implementation arrangements. They describe roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders such as teachers, MoE, and the Private School

Association. The policy guidelines have stipulated the roles of various stakeholders in provision of education of learners with SNE. The Ministry has been charged with the roles of providing policy guidance to all stakeholders on SNE, encouraging public and private institutions to establish libraries with instructional materials, SNE supervision and inspection, and developing tools for identifying learners with SNE. The Private Schools Association, which is a body that represents private schools in Malawi, has been given the role of complementing the government in provision of SNE (MoE, 2009).

Historical Background of SNE in Malawi

SNE in Malawi was started in the 1950s by faith-based organisations. They offered to help learners with visual and hearing impairments (Mwale et al., 2010). Mkandawire et al. (2016) noted that the government did not assume responsibility of educating children with SEN. Instead, religious organisations shouldered the responsibility. Research indicates that SNE was started by the Scottish and South African Evangelical Missionaries in Kasungu and Nsanje. It was in 1968 when SNE began at Montfort campus (Chavuta et al., 2008). Montfort College, which is found in Chirazulu district, performs the role of training learners with SEN and specialist teachers from Malawi and other Southern Africa Development Community countries (Mwale et al., 2010). Later on, the government began to assist the faith-based organisations with grants (Mwale et al., 2010).

Success in SNE Provision due to Policy Development

The efforts in promoting SNE through policy development appear to have borne some fruits. There are some success stories. Enrolment for learners with SEN has increased. Resource rooms have been opened in regular schools (Mwale et al., 2010). The MoE also issued a directive that all of its institutions should have structures that are disability friendly (Mkandawire et al., 2016).

Another success is that Malawi has specific government structures looking into disability issues. Malawi has a Ministry of Gender, Youth, Disability and Welfare, and under this Ministry, there is a Department of Disability which looks into the issues of disability. Special education modules have been introduced in teacher training institutions of higher learning (Mkandawire et al., 2016). Further success has been the opening of the SNE Directorate in the MoE (Mwale et al., 2010).

Background of Inclusive Education

According to UNESCO (2009), IE is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners. It is a key strategy to achieving “Education for All Goals” which were adopted in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. It is based on the fact that education is a human right and it is a foundation for a just and equal society. The major support for IE was given at the World Conference on SNE in Salamanca, Spain 1994. More than 300 participants, representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations, attended the conference (UNESCO, 1994). They considered the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of IE, thereby enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with SEN (UNESCO, 1994).

The Salamanca conference concluded that SNE cannot advance in isolation, but rather by reforming the ordinary schools. IE is seen as an effort of preventing discriminatory attitudes, forming a welcoming society, creating an inclusive society and achieving education for all. It is also believed that IE is cost effective as it does not require construction of new schools accommodating learners with various special needs (UNESCO, 1994). The World Education

Forum which took place in Dakar in 2000 was held to review the progress made on IE. The forum declared that education must consider the needs of the poor and disadvantaged including working children, nomads, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children, young people, adults affected by conflicts, HIV, hunger and poor health and those with disabilities and special learning needs (UNESCO, 2009). IE is a move towards trying to address the diverse needs of children. It involves changing the content, strategies, and structures. It is based on the conviction that education of all children is the responsibility of the regular education system (UNESCO, 2009).

One of many goals of SNE is to give students a chance to participate in the least restrictive environment so that they receive as much education as possible with students without disabilities (Mark et al., 2012, as cited in Mkandaire et al., 2016, p.13). When learners with SEN are given the required support in an inclusive setting, they are able to develop a more positive concept (Schmidt, & Cagran, 2008, as cited in Chavuta et al., 2008, p.17).

Inclusion is important as it encourages the school to review its structures, approaches to teaching, pupil grouping and use of support to enable the school to meet the diverse learning needs of all its pupils. It is regarded as political struggle against exclusive attitudes (Farrell, 2003).

This study focused on the implementation of NSNEPG in private secondary schools of Malawi. It was meant to guide the government and all stakeholders on how to include learners with SEN in education interventions. The guidelines have been made to promote inclusion of learners with SEN as a way towards attaining a more inclusive society, bearing in mind their existence in the schools. The rationale of the policy guidelines is to provide procedure on how government and other stakeholders can effectively mainstream learners with disabilities (MoE, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Malawi has attempted to develop adequate policies and the legal environment for promoting and upholding the rights of people with SNE. Some of these policies include the National Special Needs Education Policy and the National Policy on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities among others. Although Malawi has relatively good policies on IE, most of the contents have not been fully implemented (Mkandawire et al., 2016). The education of those with SNE has not significantly improved since the policies were formulated. In addition, there is a critical shortage of literature on SNE (Munthali et al., 2013; Mkandawire et al., 2016). Previous studies (Ishida et al., 2017; Kamchedzera, 2010; Mwale et al, 2010) have been conducted to assess the implementation of SNE policies in public schools. The studies conducted in the public secondary schools have clearly highlighted that implementation of SNE and IE is a challenge in Malawi. The gap in literature from private schools represents a form of lack of inclusivity as private schools in Malawi have a different governing system from that of public schools. The results from public schools cannot adequately address SNE issues in private schools. Currently, it is not very clear what private schools are doing with respect to following government SNE policies. Similarly, there is little known about how private secondary schools implement the NSNEPG.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how private secondary schools in Zomba district (Malawi) implement the NSNEPG that advocate for IE.

Main Research Question

How do private secondary schools implement the NSNEPG?

Specific Research Questions

1. What do the teachers in private secondary schools know about NSNEPG?
2. What resources do private secondary schools use for the effective implementation of the NSNEPG?
3. How do private schools support learners with SEN?
4. What factors affect the implementation of NSNEPG in private secondary schools?

Significance of the Study

This study has attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge on SNE by filling the gap in literature on policy and practice regarding the implementation of NSNEPG in private secondary schools. This study further shows how private secondary schools in Malawi implement the NSNEPG.

Secondly, this study is significant because it provides information on the implementation of policies of SNE in the private sector. Specifically, this study has potential to inform policy makers and implementers on the necessary improvements that are required to support the implementation of NSNEPG in private secondary schools in the country.

Literature Review

This study reviewed both local and international related literature on SNE and IE which helped to identify research gaps that this study was attempting to explore.

International Standards and Frameworks that Advocate for IE and SNE Policies

NSNEPG is a response to international standards and frameworks. It is a strategy that Malawi has formulated to fulfil its international obligations. The NSNEPG cannot be fully understood without first reviewing the international standards. The international standards and frameworks lay a strong foundation for NSNEPG and other SNE policies. One of the significant standards that Malawi has committed itself to is the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on SNE (UNESCO, 1994), which seeks to promote access to education for all learners with SEN. Principles were adopted reaffirming what was found in various legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNESCO, 1994). Furthermore, other national instruments that promote education for all learners are the National Education Sector Plan (NESP) and Malawi Development Growth Strategy (MDGS) (Itimu & Kopetz, 2008).

Knowledge of Special Needs Education and related Policies

International findings on knowledge concerning SNE related policy slightly vary. A study done in Namibia revealed that some teachers lacked knowledge about inclusive education policy. This situation had been attributed to lack of training by the Ministry of Education on policy issues. Furthermore, the study revealed that some teachers had not even read the policy on inclusive education. This situation has led teachers to implement the policy in their own way. For instance, they made the learners with SEN sit in front so that they are able to see the chalkboard and enlarged letters for those who are short sighted (Hausika, 2017). Mantey (2014) affirms the Namibian findings in his study done in Ghana. The study established that teachers in the schools studied had limited or no knowledge of the Act for people with disabilities. Some

did not know the details of the Act. Another study done in Tanzania by Pima (2012) observed that of the six teachers who were interviewed, only one knew the National Policy on Disability. The presence of one teacher out of six who were knowledgeable about the policy indicated some limitations in the implementation process. In the study by Pima (2012), it was pointed out that when policy stakeholders have not directly interacted with the policy statements themselves, the result is confusion and gaps in understanding of the phenomenon.

In Malawi, Mwale et al. (2010) found out that many teachers in Malawi were ignorant of the SNE policies. In the study by Mwale et al. (2010), it was further discovered that Primary Educaton Advisers and District Education Managers were exceptional as they demonstrated that they knew the policy by stating its strategies. This study was conducted in public primary schools in Malawi. This study left out the voices of secondary school teachers in private secondary schools.

Despite widespread lack of knowledge of SNE related policies, a study in Kenya by Muhombe et al., (2015), revealed a different scenario. It was found that a majority of the participants were aware of the SNE policy and believed that it was being implemented. Only 27.27% of the teachers who took part in the study indicated that they were not aware of the SNE policy framework. The authors observed that the policy is still in its early stage of implementation, with many of its contents yet to be implemented. From the literature reviewed, it shows that policy awareness is an issue in some countries in Africa including Malawi. However, the studies conducted did not include private schools.

Suitable Resources for Implementing SNE Policies

Farell (2003) outlined suitable resources for learners with SEN as follows: adaptive equipment, aids to learning and braille, journals and other publications and play games. Learners with SEN also need technologies to facilitate access and participation in the general classroom (Smith & Tyler, 2011). Learners with SEN also need hearing aids, sign language, picture boards, audio and other visual devices. These are important since children with SEN learn through hearing and touching. The other resource is mobility equipment such as wheelchairs. They help the child to move independently in his or her environment (Kirk et al., 2009, as cited in Pima, 2012, p. 20).

Apart from the resources outlined above, policy implementation needs human resources. Hausika (2017) had argued that the largest challenge to policy implementation is lack of training of teachers. Ukpepi and Opuwari (2019) argued that teachers are implementers of curriculum at any level of education. Hence there is a need for adequate staff to teach in an inclusive class. Furthermore, to meet the education needs of children with SEN, there is need for a special education teacher. Teachers need the support of special needs teachers to assist them in providing equal opportunities to students with SEN. Teachers of learners with SEN also need time for planning (Swarup, 2006).

Despite the significance of resources outlined above, it has been observed that inclusive schools in developing countries lack resources (Mariga et al., 2014). A study in Namibia revealed that schools lacked physical and human resources to implement inclusive education policy effectively (Hausika, 2017). Similarly, a study done in Zambia revealed that there was a lack of adequate resources for implementing the inclusion policy. Schools in the study lacked specialised support staff such as education psychologists, sign interpreters and braille experts. This situation was due to the lack of adequate funding for schools (Ngulube, 2016). A study done in Nigeria revealed that most teachers were not qualified and were not committed to

achieving the goals of inclusive education (Ukpepi and Opuwari, 2019). Studies conducted in Malawi public schools by Banks and Zuurmond (2015) and Chataika et al. (2017) found out that schools were ill-equipped to meet the needs of the learners with disabilities.

Support for Learners with SEN

The NSNEPG advocate for support for learners with SEN (MoE, 2009). Learners with SEN need support for them to reach their potential academically. In an inclusive class, teachers employ a number of strategies that enhance learning for all learners and provide specific support to those learners who experience barriers to learning (Walton et al., 2009).

Maathuis (2016) argues that in order to support learners with SNE, the teaching methods to be used should be those ones that encourage students to think and express their opinions. In an inclusive class, children learn through discovery and working together. Therefore, teachers also need to adjust the standard curriculum to the learning needs of the learners with SEN. Furthermore, learners with SEN need a clean environment. Maathuis (2016) further contends that the families and community should render similar support to learners with SNE.

According to Mariga et al., (2014), learners with SEN can also be supported by teachers through identifying the challenges the child experiences in learning and then drawing up a plan on how to overcome those difficulties. This is known as an Individual Education Plan (IEP). All students with SEN should therefore have an IEP started. The IEP should contain the strategies that have proved useful in helping the child to cope at school (Mariga et al., 2014). When teaching the learners with SEN, teachers should make their communication clear. They should be clearly seen by all pupils and stand closer to learners with SEN. This is necessary so that the learners with SEN can hear and see the teacher. The teacher should also project his/hervoice and repeat important messages (Mariga et al., 2014).

Studies indicate that support for learners with SEN is not enough in independent schools. For example, a study in South African private schools showed that support was not enough (Walton et al., 2009). A learner or a visitor who uses a wheelchair may find it difficult to access the independent schools of South Africa. Less than half of the Independent Schools of South Africa (ISASA) are accessible to learners who use a wheelchair (Walton et al., 2009). Findings from South Africa are similar to a Kenyan study conducted by Ireri et al. (2020). The schools studied were reported to have inaccessible buildings. There were physical barriers such as lack of ramps and wide doors; and this was making learning difficult and unsafe for learners with SEN. This was attributed to lack of regular monitoring and evaluation of school physical resources. Similar findings were found in Ghana by Mantey (2014). The study revealed that the buildings of the schools studied were inaccessible to those who use mobility devices. Learners needed personal assistance to get around the school. There were no specific toilets for children with disabilities in all the schools visited.

Challenges Faced when Implementing IE and its Related Policies

A number of studies indicate that the implementation of IE faces challenges. The challenges point at teachers not receiving any training on SNE. For example, in a study in Zimbabwe which sought to find the perceptions of teachers towards inclusion, it was discovered that teachers lacked competence on how to handle learners with disabilities. Teachers had complained that they had never been trained on how to handle pupils with different disabilities (Kurebwa, 2014).

Chavuta et al. (2008) conducted a baseline study in Malawi which showed that there was a lack of skills on the part of teachers as they were failing to provide adequate and relevant support to learners with disabilities. Lack of training was cited as a major challenge as it makes it difficult for the teachers to identify SEN and to teach in an inclusive manner.

Another challenge affecting the implementation of the SNE policies is lack of resources. The schools reported in most of the literature do not have enough specialised teaching and learning materials such as braille and resource rooms (Banks and Zuurmond, 2015; Chavuta et al., 2008; Munthali, 2011; Mwale, 2010; Udoba, 2014). Udoba (2014) observed that lack of resources is associated with budgetary constraints allocated to schools. A study conducted in the USA found that the average cost for educating a child with disability is 1.9 times the cost for educating a child without disabilities (Stubbs, 2008). The cost could be even higher in developing countries where it is even more difficult to reach all children in need of education regardless of disability. National budgets in developing countries, like Malawi, are often limited and families cannot always afford the cost of education (Stubbs, 2008).

In summary, studies conducted in public secondary schools have highlighted that implementation of IE is a challenge. However, studies to investigate the implementation of National Special Needs Education Policy in private schools in Malawi are limited. In light of the literature reviewed, it was necessary to do a study to understand how private schools implement the policy guidelines that advocate for IE.

This study was guided by the task model of policy implementation by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002). According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), there are a number of tasks under implementation that can be done once a policy has been adopted. The six strategic tasks are policy legitimisation, constituency building, resource accumulation, organisation design and modification, mobilising resources and monitoring progress and impact (Crosby, 1996). This theoretical framework was used to guide data collection as well as the analytical framework of the study.

Study Design and Methodology

The study used phenomenology as its study design and a qualitative methodology to explore the implementation of the NSNEPG. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group (Creswell, 1994).

This study aimed at understanding the human lived experience of the teachers in private secondary schools (Lester, 1999). Lester (1999) contends that the aim of phenomenology is to identify phenomena and how they are perceived by the actors in a situation. The study involved detailed examination of the participants' life in the world (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Smith and Osborn further indicate that phenomenology is concerned with personal perception of an event and an object. The goal of this study was to describe the lived experiences of teachers in private schools based on the research questions (Streubert & Carpenter, 2003).

Qualitative research methodology studies the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This research design was ideal for the study since it aimed at understanding human lived experience of the teaching in private secondary schools (Lester, 1999). As such, this study followed private secondary school teachers in their work place and asked them to explain their everyday life in implementing

NSNEPG. According to Myers (2009), qualitative research is designed to assist researchers understand people and their social and cultural context.

Sampling
This study used a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling (Kothari, 2004). Purposive sampling is selecting participants of a study based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the research questions (Yin, 2011). Through purposive sampling, four private schools, four Head teachers and sixteen teachers were identified. The schools were selected purposively because they had learners with SEN and therefore, they were valuable sources of relevant and rich information about implementation of the NSNEPG. The headteachers of the schools were therefore automatically included in the sample. The teachers who took part in this qualitative study were those who could provide the necessary information because they had learners with SNE in their classes. Table 1 shows details of the study sample:

Table 1: Sample of this Study

Name of school	Head Teachers pseudonyms	Teachers pseudonyms
A	HTI	(i) Mr Mtedza (iii) Mr Mbewu (ii) Mr Chimanga (iv) Mr Mbatata
B	HT2	(i) Mrs Makaka (iii) Mrs Bowa (ii) Mr Nandolo (iv) Mr Kapinga
C	HT3	(i) Mr Mapira (iii) Mr Sapanga (ii) Mr Mabilinganya (iv) Mr Eng
D	HT4	(i) Mr Mango (iii) Mr Masuku (ii) Mr Tomato (iv) Mr Kamba

Data Generation Methods
The first data generation method was document analysis. Document analysis is the study of human recorded communications such as books and websites (Babbier, 2010). Document analysis in this study was important because it provided background information and contextualised this research (Bowen, 2009). The documents that were analysed in this study were the international standards on SNE and the NSNEPG.

The second data generation method was semi-structured face to face interviews. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide made up of open-ended questions (Brikci &Green, 2007). The study interviewed sixteen teachers and four head teachers individually. Semi-structured face to face interviews were used in the study because it is a quick method to collect rich data directly from the participant. An interviewer can probe deeper into the situation. One does not only adhere to the detailed interview guide. Furthermore, semi-structured interview gives the interviewer an opportunity to rephrase or elaborate the question (Kajornboon, 2004).

The study used observation to triangulate the interview data. Observation helped in seeing how the study participants actually behave in class with learners with SNE. The data generated was used to verify information provided during the face-to-face interviews Hancock et al., 2007; (Kajornboon, 2004). This study observed teachers in the classrooms and the school environment. Twelve lesson observations were conducted in each of the four schools that participated in the study. At this time, it was felt that saturation was reached and no new data

was being generated. The strength of the observation method is that subjective bias is eliminated. The information generated is not complicated by either past behaviour or future attitudes, it gives first-hand information and it is independent of the respondent's willingness to respond (Burgess, 1982).

Ethical Considerations

As a researcher, there was an obligation to respect the rights, needs and values of the study participants (Cresswell, 2003). They were assured of their right to participate freely (Brikci & Green, 2007). Participants were not forced to participate in the study. They first signed an informed consent to participate in the study. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the names of the participants have not been used in this study. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the study participants (Brikci and Green, 2007)

Data Analysis

Data was analysed thematically. The data analysis was guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study in relation to previous related literature. Data analysis proceeded through six phases: familiarisation with the data, coding, codes sorted into potential themes, constructing themes, naming themes, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented based on the five themes which emerged from the analysis of data from the four specific research questions, namely: knowledge of policy, resources for effective implementation of the NSNEPG, support given to learners with SEN and factors affecting the implementation of the NSNEPG.

Knowledge of the Policy

The findings of the study revealed that the nine teachers from private secondary schools who took part in this study lacked knowledge of the NSNEPG. Mr Mtedza gave the following response when asked if he was aware of the policy:

> *I have never heard about this policy; this is my first time to hear about it* (Mr Mtedza).

For the teachers who admitted that they had knowledge of the NSNEPG, it was found out that they did not know the details of the NSNEPG. Teachers and head teachers, who had heard about the policy, heard it through TV, radio, friends and workshops about SNE, and not about the specifics of NSNEPG. All the four private secondary schools that took part in this study did not have the policy document in their school.

The findings of this study concur with the finding of another study conducted in public primary schools by Mwale et al. (2010). It was found that teachers did not have knowledge of SNE policies. The study also found that although some teachers were aware of the policies, they were unable to state the policy contents. Lack of knowledge of the policy indicates that the policy cannot fulfil task two of constituency building of the theory by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002). The effectiveness of a policy depends on how it is disseminated and understood by its stakeholders (Ntombera, 2006, as cited in Pima, 2012, p.16). In order to implement a policy, people need to understand the content (including definitions and key terms) of the policy. If people do not understand the contents of a policy, implementation becomes a challenge. This was found to be true with other education policies in Malawi such as repetition, pregnancy and

teacher-ratio policies (Wolf et al., 1999). For the NSNEPG to be known by their stakeholders there is a need to fulfil task number two of policy implementation developed by Blinkerhoff and Crosby (2002). The task involves constituency building.

Resources for Effective Implementation of the NSNEPG

The private secondary schools studied lacked special resources required for the implementation of the NSNEPG. This was reported by all the sixteen teachers. Mr Sapanga had this to say:

> *We do not have resources. This is a private school. There is shortage of resources. We just improvise* (Mr Sapanga).

All the four schools lacked assistive devices which is one of the needs of learners with SEN (MoE, 2009). The books were not modified in any way: they had a regular font size of twelve. It was observed in school B that the learners with albinism placed their books close to their eyes when reading. Furthermore, none of the four private schools visited had resource rooms. In addition to that, the four schools did not have sporting grounds in a condition supportive for learners with SEN.

Apart from the special resources for learners with SEN, there is also a shortage of general resources such as books. For the teachers who teach literature, it is a great challenge. This makes it difficult for learners who may need to have the book in their hands to understand.

The findings on resources by this study do not come as a surprise. The findings are consistent with a study in public schools of Malawi. It was found out that lack of resources for learners with SEN is a major challenge affecting implementation of SEN policies (Mwale et al., 2010).

Observations confirmed what emerged out of the interviews. Both classroom and school observation showed that the schools did not possess any special resource specifically for learners with SEN. Blackboards being used in the four private schools studied were not disability friendly. They were faint and unclean such that those with visual difficulties found it difficult to see what was written on the chalk board. The library did not have visual impairment friendly books and those that correspond to the secondary school curriculum.

The unavailability of resources for implementing is working against the task model of policy implementation by Crosby (1996) which was used in this study. The third strategic task of the model is resources accumulation. This involves securing funds. To implement a new policy, human, technical and financial resources must be set aside (Crosby, 1996). The theory of Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) recognises the need for resources for successful implementation of a policy.

Support Given to Learners with SEN

The four private secondary schools were providing support to learners with SEN in the following ways: offering extra teaching, changing sitting plan and modifying assessment. Mrs Makaka had this to say:

> *If I know that a student has a problem, I allow him or her to sit in front where he can see. This occurs when the learners with SEN have been identified* (Mrs Makaka).

Lesson observations revealed that all 12 teachers who were observed used the question-and-answer method and lecture method. Hayes and Bulat (2017) argued that teachers should use multiple strategies to present content to learners with SEN. These strategies include case studies, role play, group work and peer learning.

The evidence from the school observation showed that little support is being provided to the learners with SEN in the four schools studied. The school buildings, beginning from the administration, classrooms, library, laboratory and toilets, had no ramps for easy mobility by learners with physical impairments. The toilets in all the four schools studied were in-accessible for learners with physical impairment.

Another study in Malawi also indicates that there is lack of suitable resources to support learners with SEN. In a study conducted by Chavuta et al. (2008), it was revealed that schools lacked friendly infrastructure such as classrooms and sanitation facilities. It was reported that most schools had steps and were without ramps to ease the mobility of learners with SEN to and from the classrooms.

The findings of this study are consistent with several other studies from outside Malawi which indicate that support for learners with SEN is not enough in private schools. For example, a study done in South African private schools showed that support was not enough (Walton et al., 2009). This is an issue of concern as it affects access and quality of education for learners with SNE.

Findings of this study in this section suggest that the four private schools in this study have not fulfilled task number four of the theoretical framework guiding this study. Task number four of Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) indicates that the implementation of any new policy is more likely to cause changes in the implementing organisation. The private secondary schools in this study did not make the required changes for the implementation of the NSNEPG.

Factors Affecting the Implementation of the NSNEPG

The study has found that the following factors are affecting the implementation of NSNEPG in the four private schools: lack of resources, failure to identify learners with SEN, lack of coordination between teachers and parents, lack of commitment from school directors and teachers, frequent changing of teachers, increased work load and lack of monitoring of the NSNEPG.

Conclusion

The study results show that nine of the sixteen teachers in this study in the four private secondary schools lacked knowledge of the NSNEPG. Seven teachers indicated that they “had heard” about the NSNEPG. However, these teachers heard about the NSNEPG through unofficial means such as media and friends. Although they had heard about the NSNEPG, it emerged that the teachers did not know the contents of the NSNEPG in detail. Yet it is stipulated in the policy that the MoE should provide policy guidance to all stakeholders. This finding represents a serious communication problem “when policy hits the ground”. The lack of adequate knowledge of the NSNEPG by teachers is a serious barrier to promotion of IE and to implementation of SNE.

The findings of this study from the four private schools shed light on how private schools are performing in terms of implementing government policies on special needs. The findings reveal that the private schools are not following government policies on SNE.

The study findings reveal that the four schools in the study have not fulfilled the tasks model of implementing a policy as developed by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002), which was the analytical framework of the study. According to the tasks model, to implement a policy, there is need for gathering support for a new policy and accumulation of resources, the organisation implementing the policy has to be modified, putting the policy into action and monitoring progress and impact. However, the findings reveal that there was little support for the NSNEPG, the four schools did not have resources for implementing the NSNEPG. Furthermore, the schools did not modify their practices and environment. Consequently, the NSNEPG was not put into full implementation.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the researchers would like to make the following recommendations:

Firstly, the government should sensitise private school stakeholders (including Headteachers, teachers and learners) about the NSNEPG in order to increase knowledge of the policy. School based in-service training can be utilised for this under the guidance of education experts to support schools. Other means of sensitisation can include use of media through jingles and radio programmes.

Secondly, the government must monitor the implementation of the policy especially in privately run schools. Routine inspection of schools must include finding out how schools are doing in relation to national policies on SNE.

Thirdly, private schools themselves should take a leading role in supporting learners with SEN. They should be able to buy some of the materials needed to effectively assist learners with SEN.

Lastly, the government should include private schools in its SNE programs. When the government organises special needs workshops, private schools should be fully involved.

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Engaging, Affirming, Nurturing Inclusive Environment: A Grounded Theory Study in the Philippine Context

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Abstract

Implementing the tenets of inclusive education in different countries may be diverse because of varying interpretations, contexts, and ways of application. In the Philippines, studies that delve into the kind of environment involving Filipino children with special needs are scarce. Thus, through a grounded theory approach, this qualitative paper aims at developing a framework as a means of understanding inclusive environments thriving in an inclusive Philippine setting. Thirty-two special education teachers from three private schools were interviewed, the data being triangulated through class observations. The emerging theory encapsulated three major dimensions to understand concepts of inclusive environment: engaging environment, affirming environment, and nurturing environment. An engaging environment points to having high-standard learning outcomes, promoting collaboration and communication among learners, teachers, and parents, and involving them in decision-making. An affirming environment, on the other hand, denotes practicing expressive and receptive languages, imbibing the sacred worth of class members, and celebrating diversity. Finally, a nurturing environment can be achieved through interdependence and care for the needs of everyone. These dimensions are inter-related and are not standalone. This paper advances that success in the diversified Philippine inclusive classroom context can be achieved through the interdependence of school community members. The question of the significance of the inclusive practices and principles should not be the primary concern of a particular context. Rather, involvement and interdependence to achieve an engaging, affirming, and nurturing environment matter. Ramifications to micro and macro integration of inclusion that support inclusive environments are also discussed.

Keywords: inclusion in the Philippines, inclusive education, inclusive environment, inclusive pedagogy

Introduction

Inclusion has been a focus of several technical papers, as it enjoins educational systems to integrate the framework in their curricula, instruction, programs, and other capacity-building mechanisms (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2005). Inclusive education (IE) is implemented by states as a response to increasing heterogeneity in school communities. It is entrenched in providing similar classroom experiences for the diverse learners and further eliminates attitudes and values that seek to exclude and discriminate (UNESCO, 1994).

Policies create the context; however, schools make them happen (Winter & O'Raw, 2010). Hence, inclusion means more than the mere physical presence of learners with special education needs (SEN) in the inclusive classroom. A learner may thrive in an inclusive classroom, but can be excluded because of the attitude of those around him/her. A successful inclusion prompts an environment where the learner with SEN is treated as a full member or citizen of the school community (De Silva, 2013).

Inclusive education, may be seen as idealistic and unrealistic, yet it is achieved through mechanisms where presence, acceptance, participation, and achievement of all class members is valued. However, governments and nations face many challenges in achieving a just inclusive practice because of variations on how countries interpret and implement inclusion. For example, in the Southeast Asian context, there is a paucity of research on approaches for the participation of children with special needs (CSN) in the general education setting (Hosshan et al., 2019). In the same way, the kind of environment where Filipino children with special needs are involved is not explicitly addressed in the existing literature.

To narrow the chasm between theory and practice, there is a need to revisit and re-evaluate the inclusive environments. Through a grounded theory approach, this paper documents the inclusive environments offered to Filipino leaners with SEN. An interview with teachers handling inclusive classes and classroom observation of classes with children with disabilities (Autism and ADHD from Nursery to Grade 6) were conducted to gather data to address the research questions. Insights from this study will summarize a model for how school communities can provide and strengthen inclusive environments for diverse learners.

Literature Review

The Inclusive Agenda

As an educational agenda, inclusive education was institutionalized in response to the needs of diverse learners with particular emphasis on those with perceived difference (UNESCO, 1994). The school community should be a context where the learners' presence, participation, and collaboration are the top priority (Sharma & Sokal, 2015). Baglieri and Shapiro (2017) similarly claimed that IE enables children to be valued, to be considered in inclusive learning, and to be encouraged toward purposeful participation in the classroom. The policy stemmed from the mandate which asserts that quality education is a basic human right (United Nations, 1948). Through the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), government signatories adopted the framework of action and implemented IE in their own context. Inclusive education necessitated a fundamental shift in infrastructure, systems and structures, and state-wide school curricula (UNESCO, 1994). On a larger scale, IE has challenged cultures and values that continue to marginalize. In the school context, it has altered the landscape of curriculum, pedagogy, teachers' training and preparation, other delivery modes, and cultures.

Some researchers believe that IE is idealistic and unrealistic. For instance, Florian (1998) and Hornby (2014, p. 2) claimed that achieving IE is a struggle, while the latter argued that IE is "theoretically unsound and practically impossible." Nonetheless, Florian (1998) explained that the full inclusion of learners with SEN could be possible in the long run. The success of inclusion is a gargantuan task that entails the cooperation of stakeholders, especially those in the classroom. Inclusive approaches happen through the transformation of school cultures, where the learners with SEN become full members of the school community.

Inclusive Education in the Philippine Context

Philippines is a signatory of international inclusive education policies, but despite these milestones in the practice of IE, Mori (2015) argued that a significant number of Filipino learners were not able to go to school because of either financial challenge faced by households or lack of access to educational facilities. School buildings, roads and transport systems in the Philippines are generally not person with disability [PWD]-friendly, especially for the mobility-impaired (Reyes, 2014). In the National Disability Prevalence Survey (NDPS) conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) in 2016, around 10,000 individuals were classified as disabled, with different levels of disability nationwide (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority [TESDA], 2020). Women and children with disabilities were found to have lower literacy and school participation rates, and generally have lower educational attainment, than males with disabilities (Reyes, 2014). With this data, it could be reputed that the country needs to improve on creating less restrictive environments for people with disability.

Policies are heading toward inclusion of learners with SEN in the educational system. The Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 implements programs designed to address diverse learners, including those with disabilities. In fact, the implementation of IE is at the core principle of the K to 12 basic education programs. The ordinance mandates schools to deliver inclusive, quality, relevant, and accessible education to over 22 million Filipino learners (Albert, 2016). Of these students, 308,321 are learners with special needs being accommodated by 448 recognized Special Education (SpEd) centers and 173 regular schools with SpEd classes (Department of Education, 2015). However, government funded schools in the country, where most Filipino children are enrolled, are challenged with poor outcome quality, large class sizes, teacher shortage, dearth in resources, unsustainable curriculum, and contradicting perspective of lawmakers (Alegado, 2018). The country subsequently struggles in the implementation of IE due to compounded misconceptions on what IE is about, inadequate resources, knowledge and self-preparation of teachers (Muega, 2016).

To ensure excellent delivery of the inclusive agenda, intensive training on inclusive pedagogies has been organized with the aim of helping teachers effectively meet the needs of learners with SEN (DepEd, 2015), but Mina and Agbon (2017) claim that school participation among learners with SEN is generally low. Initiatives toward the attainment of IE are undertaken; however, Villamero and Kamenopoulou (2014) argue that in a country where resources are a huge challenge, IE becomes a difficult effort. In a country where resources are scarce, promoting welcoming and affirming practices is a viable option toward achieving the goal of the inclusion agenda.

An Inclusive Environment for the Diverse Learners

Inclusion is fundamentally a question of ethos and attitude. IE is not just a matter of policy and program implementation, but it also has an emotional aspect which involves the whole

community (Florian, 1998). Florian's claim (1998) is affirmed by Baglieri and Shapiro (2017) as the authors posited the need to reshape attitudes and social arrangements for effective inclusion. The environment should be a facilitator of acceptance, belongingness, and camaraderie (Vuorinen et al., 2018). However, as with the complexities that constitute inclusion, challenges and disagreements remain.

Avramidis (2010) described a positive situation in terms of the participation of learners with SEN in the inclusive classroom. Among the students with Intellectual Developmental Delay (IDD), findings from a large number of research studies show a positive effect of inclusion which include: higher expectations for student learning (Jorgensen et al., 2007); improved communication and social skills (Beukelmanet al., 2013); and better academic outcomes (Cosier et al., 2013). Despite these studies, many findings contradicted this notion and forced reassessment of this widely held belief. Kennedy (2018) and Valenzuela-Zambrano et al. (2016) opined that learners with SEN are often the subject of ridicule, bullying, and belittling of their typically developing peers. Consequently, they face problems in terms of social participation (Bossaert et al., 2011). Vuorinen et al., (2018) also claimed that finding friends is a struggle for those with a perceived difference. Studies above may have contradictory notions on inclusion, but such contradictions only show that environment plays a vital role in the development of learners with SEN.

The school communities' failure to promote inclusive philosophies and uphold inclusive practices can be attributed to values and cultures that seek to exclude (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). Behavioral, social, and emotional patterns arising in the inclusive classroom are among the most challenging dimensions in achieving the inclusive goals (Raguindin, 2020). To hurdle this predicament, a transformational notion of inclusion should be instituted (De Silva, 2013). A common feature of a transformative inclusive practice is providing a shared space where all learners can thrive. For example, these can be learning environments that promote collaboration, interaction, positive peer relationship, and support toward school success (De Silva, 2013). There is a need to challenge traditional cultures, remove biases, and replace potential barriers that impede belongingness and participation.

IE is cogent in this statement – active involvement of each member in an inclusive classroom. It implies different levels of being part of a learning environment, from being informed, being consulted, taking part, and producing output. A quintessential inclusion is a context where belongingness, participation, and engagement of diverse perspective, background, and ability is valued, embraced, and celebrated. Through a grounded theory approach, this paper sought to develop a framework as a means of understanding inclusive environments thriving in an inclusive setting.

Methodology

Design

The context of this paper necessarily calls for an emerging theory to explain the phenomenon under study. Hence, this paper is inspired by constructivist grounded theory because it allowed the researchers to follow the lead of the data and trace what happened at any point in the research process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006; Wertz et al., 2011). Data tracking employed in a constructivist grounded theory is facilitatively done through encoding and categorizing along the way (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, collection and analysis of data by employing constant comparison methods occurred in the process. The researchers also enriched simultaneous data collection and analysis by memo-writing to construct

conceptual analyses, and theoretical sampling to refine the researchers' emerging theoretical ideas. Moreover, the use of constructivist grounded theory enabled the exploration of the factors and their implications for the research. This approach was deemed appropriate because flexibility in data collection was obtained.

Through the use of this strategy, nuances in the interpretation of meaning were basically influenced by the accentuation of social context from which the data was extracted (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). It, therefore, allowed a reciprocal relationship between the researchers and participants (Chong & Yeo, 2015), and situated the researchers as contributors in the data construction (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2019). In this way, the design of this study foregrounded the tenets of constructivist idea that knowledge is constructed by interaction (Crotty, 1998).

Data Source and Collection

The data yielded from this study were initially drawn from accounts of participants from three private elementary schools. A semi-structured, open-ended interview was conducted to gather insights from purposively selected informants (profile is shown in Table 1). The interview approximately lasted for 30-40 minutes. The interview was audiotaped and transcribed.

Table 1. Profile of Participants (N=32)

Demographics		**n**
Educational Attainment		
	Master's Degree	25
	Bachelor	7
	Total	**32**
Years in the Profession		
	0-3 years	7
	4-7 years	9
	8 – 11 years	10
	12 and above	4
	Total	**32**
Position/ Classes assigned		
	SpEd Coordinator	5
	Adviser (Preschool)	4
	Adviser (Grade 1)	5
	Adviser (Grade 4)	7
	Adviser (Grade 5)	4
	Adviser (Grade 6)	6
	Subject Teacher	1
	Total	**32**

To facilitate iteration and constant comparative analysis, another set of interviews was conducted from selected informants from the previous pool for a more in-depth conversation. Additionally, the researchers conducted a series of class observations where the participants are teaching (Table 2). The simultaneous interview and observation allowed the researchers to reinforce theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling facilitates the saturation of data needed to establish theories relating to the phenomena under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The data collection was carried on until well-defined and refined data were finally saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014).

Table 2. Profile of the classrooms observed

Classroom Number	Grade Level	Total Number of Pupils	Number of observations	Number of CSN in the class/ Exceptionality
C1	Nursery	M = 6 , F = 5	1	1/ Autism/ADHD
C2	Kindergarten	M = 8 , F = 7	1	1 /Autism)
C3	Grade 4	M= 4 , F = 5	1	1/ Autism
C4	Grade 4	M= 12 , F = 14	1	1/ Autism and ADHD
C5	Grade 6	M = 10 , F = 12	1	1/ Autism

Note: M = Male, F = Female

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the authors applied credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability measures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was ensured as the researchers utilized the appropriate methods in collecting data and in selecting participants as key informants. Further, the transcribed interviews were returned to the informants for member check (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to increase the credibility of the data gathered. Meanwhile, the dependability of the data was ensured as the researchers conducted a series of observations and informal conversations (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The iteration reinforced the accuracy of the data gathered. Third, confirmability was reinforced by involving external researchers to validate the codes and categories generated from the data (Burnard, 1991; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Finally, the transferability of the study is prompted as the researchers outlined components like data collection methods, data participants, and means of data analysis. Thus, it can support other researchers to determine if there is transferability of the data gathered and the theory generated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

A permit to conduct the study was secured from the gatekeepers before the researchers commenced the data gathering (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Further, consent to take part in the study was secured to establish a clear relationship between the participants and the researcher. The consent also emphasized confidentiality and privacy in handling the data gathered.

Data Analysis

The theory generated from this study was yielded through analytical induction and constant comparison of qualitative data gathered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)**.** The researchers utilized line-by-line coding as a preliminary analysis (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The preliminary codes from the memo-writing (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014) were used to determine additional data needed to ensure that categories are well-defined, and data saturation is reached (Chong & Yeo, 2015). During the simultaneous data collection, a focused coding was conducted (Wertz et al., 2011) to bridge the initial codes and the newly gathered data. The partial codes and categories were refined through "memo sorting" (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014, p. 167). Sorting the written memo allowed a comprehensive constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). As the relationship between the codes, categories, and sub-categories was juxtaposed, the theories from the phenomenon studied were illuminated (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The generated theory was validated through comparison with literature (Chong & Yeo, 2015). The researchers made use of MAXQDA in the data analysis.

Findings

Following the tenets of a constructivist grounded theory approach, an interrelated set of dimensions that formed an emerging theory for understanding concepts of inclusive environment has surfaced in this study. Openness, flexibility, and constant comparison of extracted data from various sources yielded the following dimensions: engaging environment, affirming environment, and nurturing environment (Figure.1). Under each dimension are some qualifying descriptions that necessitate the existence of each environment to make up a macro-contextual inclusive milieu.

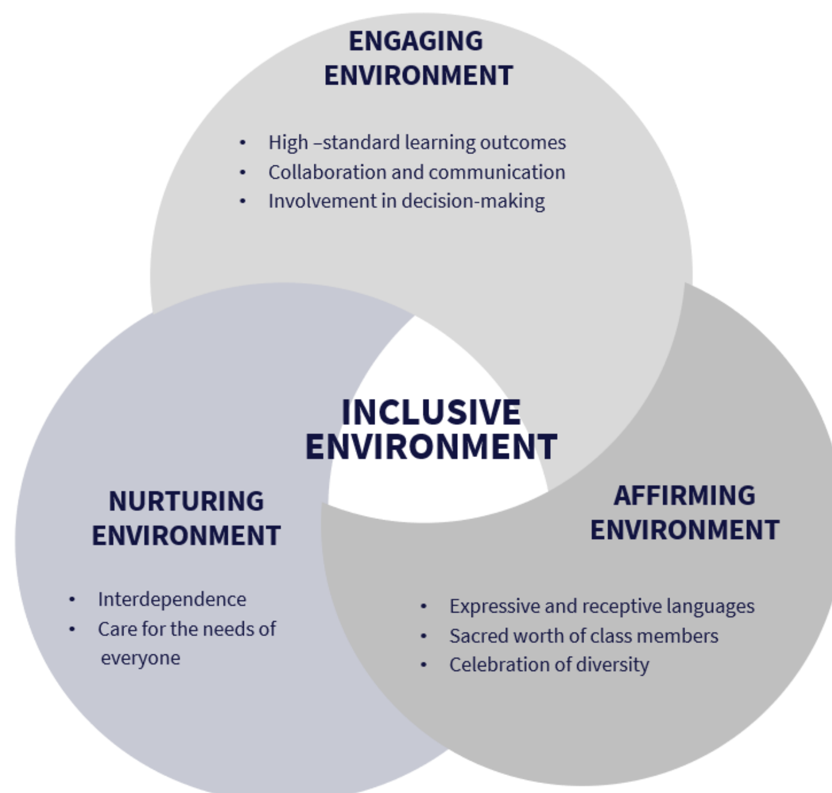

Figure 1: Model of the emergent theory of an inclusive environment

An Engaging Environment

Shreds of evidence from the data gathered construed notions that an engaging environment is consequential in implementing inclusive approaches. The participants believe that emphasis on high-standard learning outcomes, collaboration and communication, and participative decision-making are essential components to ensure that the schools achieve the inclusive goals by providing an engaging environment.

High-standard learning outcomes. The participants believe that learners with SEN and the entire class should be engaged in the teaching-learning process. For example, the participants emphasized that the multi-domain needs of the learners with SEN, as stipulated in their individualized educational plans (IEP), should be achieved. Task analysis is done to make the academic responsibility of the learners become more manageable and attainable.

> *It is my task as the class adviser to remind the CSN of tasks for the day. I do it on a daily basis so it will not be overwhelming for the child and it will be*

> *easier to digest. […] not just to get the perfect score, but to finish the task* (P1).

> *When I give modified worksheet, parents would ask me why it is different. […] I communicate the task to the child that in order to finish the task she should cooperate with me and knows that she needs extra help from the teacher (P14).*

The core of the inclusive agenda is to allow the learners with SEN to reach their potential and experience success. This inclusive environment compels teachers to actively take part in implementing inclusion no matter how tasking it is. Implementing IEP is already a multi-layered task, let alone other needs that go beyond what is outlined in the IEP.

Collaboration and communication. To promote an engaging environment, the research participants emphasized the vital role of significant others working with the learners with SEN. Hence, to reach the common goal of the inclusive classroom, engagement of the learners with SEN, is a collective effort which necessitates parents, teachers, and peers as collaborators.

> *I communicate with other teachers, and the rest of the class to make sure that we champion for the CSN. We keep close communication with parents. They are hesitant to involve their CSN in programs and other academic matters. But I remind them that we work together for the success of their child* (P26).

Working in constant collaboration and communication with other teachers allows a series of best practices to provide an engaging environment for the diverse class consistently. While there is scarcity in materials, the participants share their best practices for more efficient delivery of their tasks, as evident in the following quotes:

> *Part of our routine is to gather and plan for effective strategies* (P8).
> *I made it a part of my schedule to be in consultation with other teachers to be guided as to how to provide rich experiences for the CSN in our class* (P4).

Involvement in decision-making. Involving the CSN in the decision-making process that affects their lives, including academic endeavor, encourages and facilitates their full involvement in the diverse school community. The participants in the study attest to this:

> *To challenge the CSN in my class, I would make her decide how much work she has to do. I will not require her to work on three items only. I leave the decision to her. But, I supervise and make sure the child is still working on her task* (P22).

The participation of the learners with SEN in decision-making to reach their academic goals extends even in peer-support arrangements (for example, groupings during collaborative activities), individual work, and other processes. Peers are encouraged to provide significant support to their classmates with special educational needs. The typically developing peers know that they work alongside the CSN within their group to achieve common goals. These insights are evident in the following statements.

> *I partner (CSN) with peers who are mindful of their classmate (CSN)* (P3).

> *I assign a responsible pupil to be my little teacher. […] classmate works as shadow teacher to the CSN. […] I love doing this because the CSN accomplishes much while the little teacher becomes more focused and responsible as well* (P10).

To sum, the data exhibited an engaging community for the diverse learners through the principles, strategies and partnership employed to help the CSN achieve their goals alongside institutional goals.

An Affirming Environment

The best facilitator of school success is the recognition of the potential of each learner. An exemplary affirming environment is a context where everyone is equally valued. This study implies that the learners with SEN are given opportunities for expressive and receptive expressions, the sacredness of each class member is honored, and diversity is aggressively pursued and celebrated.

Expressive and receptive languages. The data yielded pieces of evidence of raising cultures by which language is used to affirm the involvement of learners with SEN.

> *I make sure that they have the chance to discuss and answer questions. [….]I would start calling the CSN's classmates, then ask the CSN to repeat the answer. Then, the group will know that the CSN participated in class* (P16).

> *Sometimes, the CSN in my classroom is not ready to answer my questions […] I would modify the level of difficulty of my questions. When I ask the class to spell the word, metamorphosis I would ask the CSN to spell the word fruit. And I can really see the sense of accomplishment in them* (P21).

Accounts with which the CSN in the inclusive classroom are sometimes intimidated and left behind in terms of expressing their thoughts and ideas in a distinct form, were elucidated by the participants.

> *During discussion, there are instances when the CSN would start to withdraw, especially when they see their peers contributing a lot. That is when the CSN is silent* (P17)

> *It is sometimes risky to involve the CSN. I have this experience in my class when the CSN was so much frustrated and started to shout and cry. Then, kicked the trash bin, and it landed on another classmate. I heard some classmates said, "let us transfer him to another section because of his behavior* (P30).

These accounts explain why the class withdraws communication with the classmate with special needs for several reasons: (a) the CSN throws tantrums during deep frustrations, (b) they do not perform like their non-disabled peers all the time. There are factors that create an unfavorable environment for the CSN like intimidation and difficulty to process emotions, which can be directly attributed to their exceptionality. Data also showed that bullying, demeaning, and threatening do not flourish in their classrooms. There are no accounts where

language is used as a weapon of assault. However, learners in the standardized curriculum might distance themselves from classmates in the inclusive curriculum.

The sacred worth of class members. Another means of affirming the diversity in the inclusive approach is valuing the sacredness of each class member. School communities must pursue a fair community. Hence, learners with SEN should be regarded as members of the school communities who can attain their fullest potential.

Participants agreed that inclusive education is a challenging task. The burden of providing scaffolding for the learners in the standardized curriculum and inclusive curriculum significantly rests on the teachers. Thus, internalizing the goal of inclusive education, which is to provide success for all learners from a diverse group, is very important and should be given utmost consideration.

> *I would set up the physical environment in such way they everyone has something to do especially during free time (time to go around the learning centers). When the shadow teacher is not present, I do one-on-one approach to support the CSN [...] I would assign "little teachers" to help their classmate (CSN). The CSN is provided with the much needed support* (P9).
>
> *One time, we had this inter-school intramural. I made an arrangement with other coaches to put into the game those CSN from our teams. We had to do this so they will also succeed in several co-curricular activities without being intimidated. Their teammates agreed. They did perform well in the game. In fact, they were cheered the most* (P3).

Although interviewees shared an ideal experience, pieces of evidence from the observation conducted showed that Pupil 3 exhibited significant difficulty in accomplishing the paperwork. Pupil 3 is in full inclusion and does not have a shadow teacher. The teacher checks on the CSN, but no scaffolding is done. Also, no clear directions are given on how to proceed with the worksheet. During the entire course of working on the worksheet, the CSN just stared at his paper and even had an episode of suddenly screaming. According to the Coordinator (P8), the child is new in the school. They attribute the misbehavior to the apparent lack of guidance provided in his past school, and he had difficulty following classroom routines implemented by the new school environment.

An affirming environment ends not only with tolerance. Tolerance on how the CSN performs in the class every day because of what she/he can do and cannot do is not enough. There existed some documented misgivings in the involvement of the CSN in the inclusive classrooms. At the moment, this tolerance may not be enough, but it is a good starting point of a high-quality inclusive education practice, especially in the context of a developing country.

Celebration of diversity. Finally, an affirming environment is a community that pursues and celebrates diversity. The most cogent means of achieving an affirming environment is integrating diversity at the core of the schools' philosophy, vision, and mission statements. The participating schools affirmed the sacred worth and human dignity of each learner as enshrined in their philosophy and undertakings. The class members are valued and equally treated.

> *We believe that this is our ministry. We want to extend help to everyone, including those with special needs. We want our students to be part in promoting what we believe as Jesus' ministry to children* (P7).
>
> *We would have annual social activities. This is the time where we showcase the talents and potential of our students. The CSN in the class become part of the activity. Every year we witness how our school celebrates diversity. In this way, we tell our students and their families that everyone matters* (P31).

Communities are being re-created through rituals and unique traditions. The schools visited for the data gathering continue with their rich traditions as they fuse innovations brought about by the increasing diversity in the school community. The CSN is brought into a celebrative community as they are catered for in a circle where opportunities for connections and participation are reinforced. These opportunities are facilitated through culminating activities, classroom programs, intramural, annual gatherings, and many more.

A Nurturing Environment

Prioritizing the well-being of class members in the pluralistic school community and caring for their needs is pivotal in a nurturing environment. An inclusive community can be engaging and affirming, but the nurturing and caring gestures expressed and extended hold these values intact.

Interdependence. CSN is involved in a supportive and collaborative class, where inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness occur. Children and youth with disabilities experience significant difficulties in developing independence in their social life. However, with the school communities being sensitive in providing scaffolding and valuable opportunities for the CSN, they powerfully champion for the CSN.

> *Children have different perceptions of the CSN in their class. They ask questions like, "Why is our classmate slow?" Why is our classmate making that sound?". I would tell them that their classmate is not yet ready to talk. "Maybe they just want to have friends with you" I would reply* (P21).
>
> *Some children also share experiences with their parents. Then, parents start to question "why do you have such classmates, and why is he like that". Then, their classmates would tell their parents, "Mommy, because he has difficulty talking* (P22).

Support comes in many forms. The most important type of support to facilitate the involvement of the CSN are children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents supporting their children, and communities supporting their schools (UNESCO, 2016).

Care for the needs of everyone. While children are still focused on reaching individual accomplishments in the class, they exhibit awareness of others' needs and presence as well. For instance, the observation conducted showed how the classmates of the learner from C1 become sensitive to their classmate's needs.

> *In an inclusive setting, you will have to choose whom to leave, especially with matters of classroom management. When I have to*

> *attend to the CSN in my class who suddenly throw tantrums, their peers would automatically keep silent and are behaved. They know we have to help their classmate in such episodes. Even parents would tell them as well. Everyone becomes an advocate* (P11).

Inclusive education practices become quintessential when they create strong and meaningful connectedness and belongingness in a community. The school community should view inclusive cultures like high-standard learning outcomes, collaboration and communication, involvement in decision-making, opportunities for receptive and expressive languages, sacred worth of each member, celebration of diversity, interdependence, and caring for the needs of other not as secondary to the implementation of the school curriculum but a central part of it.

Discussion

The findings of this paper advance an assertion of an inclusive nurturing, engaging, and affirming environment. In the parlance of inclusive approach, vital inclusive community is one that inspires shared spaces. The growing diversity in every classroom today should ensure an environment that shall facilitate, sustain, and uphold essential qualities of an inclusive classroom (UNESCO, 2017).

Comparison with Previous Studies

This paper provided some evidence for the results of previous studies. The core dimension of an inclusive environment that has emerged from the study has been repeatedly proposed by several research, position papers, and international policies.

Themes like acceptance, presence, and participation are at the core of every initiative about inclusion (UNESCO, 2017). The findings of this paper reiterate the strong call of UNESCO to alter cultures of exclusion and marginalization in the school communities. There will always be exclusionary themes that will arise in the school communities (UNESCO, 2017), thus, a constant appeal to educational systems to make inclusion a substantive concern.

The findings of this paper likewise accorded importance in co-opting learners as co-implementers of the inclusive agenda. Despite the wealth of literature available in the field, there is a lack of investigation on how children can be active implementers of IE (Raguindin & Ping, 2020). Including all children in the inclusive agenda expands the experiences of all. Jorgensen et al. (2007), for example, gave evidence to higher expectations for student learning as a positive effect of inclusion. The school community should view inclusive cultures like nurture, acceptance, tolerance, and empathy not as secondary to implementing the school curriculum but are a central part of it (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017).

The study also corroborates the important role of teachers as main implementers of the inclusive agenda. It further affirms the importance of pedagogical decisions teachers have to make and implement steps toward a more inclusive classroom. The teachers' multi-layered and complex role in the inclusive agenda necessitates them to acquire inclusive philosophies and implement inclusive pedagogies (Raguindin et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2018).

On a micro aspect, the previous study of Custodio (2019) claimed that Filipino teachers have knowledge on the principles of IE, but they implement placement of learners with SEN based on certain standards that appear to be exclusive. This practice reflects a barrier to participation

and achievement of learners with SEN. On the contrary, this paper supported findings that a functional inclusive environment can thrive in a diverse classroom in the Philippine setting.

New Knowledge Generated

This study warrants a better understanding of the interconnectedness of three important themes which are vital in building inclusive environment. This paper argues that an engaging, affirming, and nurturing environment is a place where learning is pervasive. Despite the contested definition of inclusion, through the model, we assert that it should be implemented in the context of belonginess and collective journey of all members of the school community.

Moving towards inclusivity is believing that all children can learn, and all children can engage in learning with rigor. It also means that all children can learn, grow, and benefit from a wide array of experiences and ideas that may be offered in the academic (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017) and social setting (Martínez & Porter, 2020). Thus, it compels educational institution to innovate strategies for inclusive pedagogies such as forging high-standard learning outcomes, collaborating and communicating with all stakeholders, and placing all learners on top of their academic journeys. Like their typically developing peers, learners with SEN have their needs and thinking preferences that necessitate quality, interactive, and engaging instructional environment (Liasidou, 2015).

The model also highlights the importance of an atmosphere where plurality is affirmed, and heterogeneity is celebrated. Success in the inclusive classroom is not the struggle of learners with SEN alone, but it is also the responsibility of their peers, teachers, the entire school community, and even their families (De Silva, 2013). Rendering the concept of inclusion is understanding the role of the society to denounce collectively values and cultures that seek to exclude and marginalize. Upholding inclusionary themes like being sensitive to expressive and receptive languages, respecting the sacred worth of the class members, and celebrating diversity is a powerful means of combating discrimination.

The realization of interdependence and care for the needs of everyone is also a common theme in practicing IE. In a nurturing environment, the issue of access, equity, equality of support, resources, and opportunity is a normative part of the school culture (UNESCO, 2016). In a context where diversity is substantial and belongingness can be tenuous, it is primarily the concern of inclusive education to bring to the school community practices that shall promote an engaging, affirming, and nurturing environment for the sake of all learners.

The context discussed in this paper catalyzes the foundation on which a vital community of learning is formed, a context where the educational experience of all learners is extended. A school that is neatly based on an inclusive and cooperative structure utilizes the capacity of all members of the community and creates possibilities of stimulation and enrichment. When this is realized by the community, it will facilitate learning, encourage positive attitudes, and explore ways of doing things (UNESCO, 2016). This will subsequently yield all learners, regardless of perceived difference, to have a better chance of joining in the structures and processes taking place in their communities and societies.

Conclusion

Although a necessity for a wide-scale participation of schools to firm up the emerged theory should exist, this paper only observed from classes with children with disabilities. It did not seek to cover other components of inclusion like cultural, gender, language, and socio-

economic differences. Furthermore, this work is also limited by its consideration of urban context and did not tend to investigate phenomena that arise in inclusive classrooms in the rural context.

As inclusive education is based on values and principles, the question whether it will work is insignificant. We should rather argue more on how to make it happen. One factor that will make inclusive education palatable is by ensuring genuine involvement of the learners with SEN in the classroom "as exclusion remains a real and present danger" (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015, p. 896). It is said that pluralism is a social practice while diversity is a curricular practice (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017), hence, a strong directive for educational institutions to undergo fundamental shift towards "education for all".

Inclusive education strives toward the pedagogies that support each member in the community to perceive themselves as capable of achieving in the path of learning. This will eventually facilitate meaningful participation in their community (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2017). This research is a step towards a more profound understanding of an inclusive environment, thus, forward the following recommendations. First, involvement has a profound effect in the capacity of the CSN to participate and succeed in accessing the school curriculum. Schools practicing inclusion should ensure the full involvement and sustain as well as strengthen the participation of learners through effective and relevant pedagogies. Second, the entire school community should be prepared to extend adequately their repertoire of capacities to respond effectively to the heterogeneity of the school population. Specifically, teachers, who directly deal with every learner in the inclusive classroom, should be provided with enabling mechanisms to internalize inclusive philosophies and implement inclusive approaches to the building of a community of learners. Third, schools should promote a strong sense of community and positive expectations for the learners with SEN to become active class members through their enabling policies, pro-active student support, meaningful parental involvement, holistic and relevant curriculum, and instructional practices. Finally, as inclusion should be a national agenda, there is a need to craft initiatives and policies that shall encourage and support inclusive environments.

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Employability and Inclusion of Non-traditional University Students: Limitations and Challenges

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Abstract

In recent decades employability has become more visible and is part of the agenda of European universities, leading to a closer link between higher education and the labour market. In this context, the objectives of this study are: to analyse the approach to employability developed by the university; to find out the influence of employability policies on non-traditional students; and the alignment of the development of employability with the democratic mission of the university. Qualitative research has been carried out at one public university in Southern Spain, based on 40 in-depth interviews, undertaken with non-traditional students and graduates, employers, and university staff. The main results obtained are: the employability approach is based on the acquisition of key skills, in the framework of neoliberal policies; the opportunities offered to students to improve their employability are unevenly distributed and, therefore, scarcely available to underrepresented students; and the market-oriented concept of employability damages non-traditional students. The development of the democratic and inclusive role to be developed by the universities requires challenging the policies and practices on employability, that are based on neoliberal perspectives. This involves the visibility of the power relations at stake as well as the promotion of critical and reflective pedagogies, with the aim of questioning and reducing the inequalities faced by non-traditional students.

Keywords: employability, higher education, inclusive education, neo-liberalism, non-traditional students

Employability is a key objective of the Bologna Process. In the last decades, employability has become more visible, and currently it is a central element in the agenda of European universities, with a greater focus on the labour market and the relationship between training and employment (Hernández-Carrera et al., 2020). On the other hand, today's university hosts an increasing volume of "non-traditional students" (Crosling et al., 2008), who present different characteristics from the traditional historical profile of middle-class students. The results of a Europe-wide survey (Hauschildt et al., 2019) show that 37% of students are over 25 years old, 23% have a migration background, and 43% are first-generation students. In different international and disciplinary contexts, the category of non-traditional students includes older adults, women, people bringing different levels of cultural or economic capitals, people with disabilities, first-generation students, people of immigrant origin, or belonging to ethnic minorities.

Although there has been a significant expansion and massification of higher education, this is not always reflected in equal opportunities for access to graduate employment. Research indicates that some students, particularly from non-traditional profiles, face specific difficulties in achieving effective labour market transitions (Brown & Hesketh, 2004), need more time to find high-skill jobs, are more likely to find employment below their skill level and are paid lower wages (Purcell et al., 2007). The question of whether students with vulnerable profiles gain the same benefits from higher education as their middle and upper-class peers is central to discussions on employability. Employability policy managers do not always take into account the needs presented by the heterogeneity of the student body (Reid, 2016). Moreover, equity policies have focused mainly on access to the university system, with little attention to graduate outcomes (Bennett, 2019). The social dimension of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) implies the need for all groups of students, regardless of their personal or social circumstances, to have the opportunity to access university and complete their studies. The London Communiqué (European Higher Education Area [EHEA], 2007) states that the EHEA is based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles, pointing out that higher education must play a key role in promoting social cohesion, reducing inequalities and contributing to a sustainable, democratic and knowledge-based society.

It is essential to take into consideration the inequalities present in the student body and the social effects of higher education if it is to prosper as an inclusive institution and contribute to the deepening of democracy (Williams, 2016; Giroux, 2016). In this context, some questions arise, to which this study attempts to provide answers:

- how is employability developed by universities?
- to what extent does the dominant conception of employability reproduce inequalities?
- in the specific case of non-traditional students, does the current approach to employability take into account the goals of social inclusion and the democratic role of the university?

It is, therefore, necessary to understand the approach to employability developed by universities, to consider whether these institutions are actively developing the social and democratic function that is championed in many discourses on the current challenges facing universities.

Literature Review

Development of Employability from the University and its Challenges for Non-Traditional Students in Neo-Liberal Contexts

Employability was introduced into the European Union strategy in the late 1980s, becoming one of the main guidelines for education policies and active employment policies (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). The concept of employability uses a combination of two perspectives: a first perspective, focused on employment, which refers to access, maintenance and progress in work; and a second perspective, focused on skills acquired during training (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). Human capital theories consider that investment in education brings both social and individual benefits. The social benefits are the creation of a highly-skilled workforce, which will drive economic growth. Individual benefits are described in terms of career progression, earnings and increased labour market mobility (Valadas et al., 2018). The role of higher education in this context is twofold: to equip students with the skills and attributes (knowledge, attitudes and behaviours) they need in the workplace, and to ensure that graduates have the opportunity to maintain or renew the expertise and attributes demanded by the market throughout their working lives (Clarke, 2018).

The European projects CHEER (1998-2000) and REFLEX (2002-2004) were relevant to the development of research on higher education and employment. They were devoted to researching the transition from university to the labour market, and the skills and professional profiles required by employers in different sectors of work. Subsequently, the promotion of employability has been one of the focal points of the Bologna Process. In addition, the European project EMPLOY (2014-2017) aimed to improve the transitions of non-traditional students into the labour market. Thus, in recent decades employability has become more visible and is part of the agenda of European universities, developing a closer link between universities and the world of work. This context has led to the development of several employability initiatives, including external placements, international mobility programmes, extracurricular activities such as volunteering, courses and career guidance services (Clarke, 2018; O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2017). In this context, it is assumed that students are willing and able to invest money and time in such initiatives to improve their skills and employability (Vallina, 2014).

Both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union have highlighted the importance of higher education in creating a more skilled workforce, capable of contributing to economic competitiveness and social development (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). This implies understanding education as a source of human capital formation, for which training has to be adapted to current social developments and changing labour markets. In this context, education is anchored in a mainly economic perspective, focusing on costs and benefits. This perspective emphasises the relevance of the rate of return or profitability of the investment made in education (Laval, 2004). The theory of Human Capital assumes that an individual increases his or her productivity by investing in his or her education. This gives access to better salary levels and to socially valued jobs, which makes his investment in education profitable (Becker, 1993).

Although human capital theory has shown that investment in human capital is often profitable and productive, this approach simplifies the complexity of factors that interact in the relationship between training and work, and ignores both the importance of social inequalities and the unequal starting positions of students (Dubet, 2011). Human capital theory, which has generally been accepted uncritically, is not a valid tool for addressing issues such as the reduction of inequalities in access to training or the social and educational inclusion of students

with low cultural and economic capital. This approach forgets and overlooks the fact that a person's relationship with working life brings is strongly connected to identity characteristics including social class, gender, ethnicity and more (Laval, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary to resort to socio-critical theories, which can help to understand much better the relevance of social structures in relation to university education, the acquisition of skills and the successful transition to the qualified labour market (Giroux, 2016).

A risk when researching non-traditional students is to overcome the potential danger of adopting a labelling and deficit-based perspective. Although references from a variety of approaches are cited in this paper, it is important to emphasise that this research aims to overcome this pitfall. In this sense, it is relevant to highlight and recognise the capacity for agency and initiative of groups that are under-represented or suffer from structural inequalities.

Non-traditional students may go to university in more significant numbers than before, but they are less "successful" than traditional students. This is especially true when measured in neoliberal terms, emphasising individual success and the student consumer model (Sanders-McDonagh & Davis, 2018). Different authors allude to an increase in inequality, produced by the application of neoliberal policies in education systems, mainly affecting non-traditional students. According to Torres (2016), the legitimation of neoliberalism that is spreading from universities has legitimised the increasing concentration of wealth in the last hundred years and an extraordinary increase in inequality. Neo-liberal policies based on market "solutions" can hinder true inclusion and reproduce traditional class and ethnic hierarchies (Apple, 2001). Giroux (2015) argues that, in neoliberal societies, there are voiceless and powerless groups, such as low-income groups, ethnic minorities, the unemployed and immigrants. Giroux argues that neoliberalism feeds on inequality, making it the antithesis of democracy. To improve the living conditions of individuals, it is necessary to break the link between "poverty and inequality" on the one hand and "economic development" on the other. It is not possible to speak of social development if inequality is not progressively reduced, as development implies the full realisation of all human rights (Martínez, 2013). Development is about transforming people's lives, not just the economy. For this reason, education and employment policies must be considered through the double lens of how they promote economic growth and how they directly affect individuals (Stiglitz, 2006).

Higher Education as a Democratic, Inclusive Sphere

Reclaiming higher education as a public good gives relevance to a set of both economic and social effects, which contribute to the formation of more informed citizens, the deepening of democracy and a more inclusive society (Giroux, 2016; Williams, 2016). Already in 1998, the World Conference on Higher Education, organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), declared that higher education institutions should respond to this challenge by making human and social development an integral part of their daily activity (Corbett, 2008). The higher education sector must identify and implement the type and extent of change needed to prepare students for their economic, but also social, commitment (Bennett, 2019).

With the influence of neoliberalism on higher education, the notion of higher education as a public good is mostly reduced to a private good. Consequently, there is not always interest in higher education to understand pedagogy as a deeply civic, political and moral practice; that is, pedagogy as a practice for freedom (Giroux, 2016). The success of non-traditional students is not necessarily a key issue for those who develop and regulate higher education policy from a neo-liberal approach (Sanders-McDonagh & Davis, 2018). Giroux (2015) states:

> Only through such a formative and critical educational culture can students learn how to become individual and social agents, rather than disengaged spectators or uncritical consumers. At the very least, they should learn how to think otherwise and to act upon civic commitments that "necessitate a reordering of basic power arrangements" fundamental to promoting the common good and producing a strong democracy (p. 10).

To encourage this critical approach and integrate it into universities, it is necessary to develop the teaching of critical thinking skills. In the specific case of non-traditional groups, progressive and innovative methodologies, based on reflection, involved writing, and group narrative methodologies, can improve the skills to analyse, interpret and evaluate the structural and personal factors that operate in the development of university careers and in the transitions from training to the labour market (González-Monteagudo, 2010).

The dominant concept of employability represents a neo-liberal vision that is based on individual characteristics and ignores the role of the set of institutions involved (Brown et al., 2003). Employability understood as the attainment of skills and attributes for employment overlooks the needs of learners (Tronto, 2013). Therefore, a vital issue is to understand who defines the need for employability and from what point of view. It is necessary to question whether employability is an economic imperative and one of individual responsibility, or something that requires collective agreement, based on notions of reciprocity, democracy, concern for the common good and responsibility. This perspective raises the debate about the ideological power at stake and the limited influence of the voice of students, taking into account the structural dimensions of both broad society and higher education systems (Reid, 2016).

Considering critical perspectives is crucial to open up spaces for both social transformation and the reconsideration of the role of higher education regarding inequalities and social inclusion. In this context, the theory of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) can be a helpful tool for understanding social actors in educational contexts, including precarious groups. The context of the social spaces that Bourdieu calls "field" is comparable to a game with its own rules. The field of higher education institutions would be linked to factors such as the characteristics of the education system, access opportunities, qualifications, material resources and teaching processes. In relation to employability, other factors are added, such as the possession of key competences, time available for the acquisition of merit, participation in extra-curricular activities and understanding of labour market dynamics. Therefore, "players" or students need strategies, resources and dispositions to "play". In this game, they have different dispositions or *habitus*, that lead them to act or react in a specific way in the social field, and that are the result of personal, family, social and academic experiences that constitute the students' stories. The *habitus* is strongly conditioned by social class and economic capital. Bourdieu (1993) defines cultural capital as "a form of knowledge, an internalised code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations" (p. 7).

The contributions of Bourdieu and others are not limited to identifying the factors that constrain social actors, since the ultimate objective of the sociology of cultural reproduction is to provide tools to subordinate groups so that they can develop a social agentivity that transforms and overcomes the conditions of domination existing in societies of cognitive and neoliberal capitalism (Giroux, 2015; Laval, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

This study set out to understand the development of employability at the university level and its impact on non-traditional students. To do this, the following objectives were employed:

- To identify the employability approach developed by the university, based on the opinions of students, managers and teachers.
- To understand the influence on non-traditional students of the employability policies and practices developed by the university.
- To analyse the development of the university's employability, concerning its democratic mission.

Methodology

A qualitative and interdisciplinary approach has been used to analyse the university's approach to employability, the influence of employability measures on non-traditional students and the consistency of employability development with the university's democratic mission. The study was carried out in one of the Spanish public universities with the highest number of enrolments. This institution has a significant presence of non-traditional students and is located in southern Spain, the Spanish region with the greatest mismatch between supply and demand of highly qualified employment.

This is a biographical-narrative study (Elliott, 2005), which captures the richness of non-traditional students' experiences and the broader meanings of those experiences (Benson et al., 2010). This method allows us to delve into the complex interactions that people make day to day, in time and space, shaping their individual and social identities, constructing and reconstructing personal and social stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995).

Participants

In-depth biographical interviews were conducted with 40 participants. Firstly, 23 students and graduates were interviewed, belonging to the different branches of knowledge (Health, Engineering and Architecture; Social and Legal Sciences, Arts and Humanities; and Sciences). These participants met one or more characteristics that define the profile of non-traditional students (adults; working-class and part-time students; people with dependent children; students with disabilities; people from immigrant origins or ethnic minorities; first-generation students; students from a family with low economic capital). A second group, composed of 17 participants from the same city were interviewed and included the following profiles: public and private employers, guidance and support service technicians, curriculum practice managers, and university professors working on the employability of their students.

Non-traditional students are not identified in Spanish universities, making it difficult to select them for the research interviews. Participants were invited using a purposive sampling method: the authors made an initial contact with those students and staff that they already knew, as well as through academic and social networks. Additionally, participants were also selected using the snowball sampling technique, inviting the already selected participants to identify further candidates. The search for participants was carried out until saturation was reached, which means that the information collected no longer contributed to deepening the analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth biographical interviews were used to collect the data from students and graduates. An interview script was created following the model developed by González-Monteagudo (2010), addressing issues such as the social context of origin, academic and personal paths, and the transition to the labour market. Discussion in this article focuses on three key dimensions: experiences at university, university training, and employability at university. Semi-structured interviews were used for employers, curriculum practice managers and lecturers. The script, in this case, was focused on specific topics related to the research goals.

The analysis was carried out using two perspectives: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach consisted of identifying textual fragments related to the review of the literature. The inductive approach was based on the construction of emerging categories derived from the interview data. A qualitative analysis programme, NVivo 11 software, was used to organise, manipulate, classify, and analyse the data.

Ethics

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards. Participants were informed about the purposes of the research and gave their consent to participate voluntarily. Their data is kept confidential, protecting their anonymity and privacy. The rights and integrity of the participants were guaranteed at all times (Erickson, 1986).

Results

Employability Approach Developed by the University

Several studies confirm the need to adapt university training to the needs of the labour market, providing its recipients with the necessary knowledge and skills (Walsh & Powell, 2018). In line with this, participating employers identified that the university must provide students with the necessary skills to respond to the needs of the market.

> *And a university needs to be much closer to the real world of business to really start preparing students who really have what it takes.* (Gel, private employer, male).

According to Kascak et al. (2011), key skills have become mandatory elements in educational planning at all levels, essential to produce the human capital needed for the labour market. The testimony of Albert, university technical staff, reflects the relevance of this issue.

> *...there are skills that are general, that we notice a lot that students lack. As soon as they join a work team, they have to know how to work in a team, they have to know how to adapt to a change. (...) When a company needs a trainee, rather than selecting them by degree, we will try to select them by competences* (Albert, university technical staff, male).

With this approach, students go through the process of transformation from "raw materials" to "finished products" (Pitan, 2017), which are presented to employers (Holmes, 2013), offering them the product they expect (Clarke, 2018). In the following quote, a teacher explains an activity they carry out in their subject to work on employability:

> *...they have to offer themselves, to address the company to tell them what they can bring to the company (…). I think that this initiation to the professional side*

> *is crucial (...) that they look for a place, and that in this interview they prepare themselves well so that they give the best of themselves so that the employer does not say no to them; they cannot go with a no, they must prepare the first interview very well* (Debono, university professor, male).

Employability, understood as the acquisition of key competences, is an unrealistic approach and does not fully capture the complexity of preparation for work (Jackson, 2016), as it does not take into account the influence on the employment of individual characteristics, the impact of perceived employability or labour market factors (Clarke, 2018). Bourdieu (1988) argues that a student's responsiveness to employability is not merely a matter of skills of a particular type for employment, as it involves his or her social and educational history, cultural understanding and customs. If it is assumed a reductionist approach to employability based on a "toolbox" that students must acquire, the social dimension tends to be circumvented. In this way, issues of cultural capital and unequal power relations between individuals and groups are not taken into account (Kendall & French, 2018).

The dominant discourse on employability places the responsibility for maintaining employment on graduates as individuals (Veld et al., 2015). In individualising the social, all social problems and their effects are interpreted as individual errors, rooted in the lack of individual responsibility (Giroux, 2014). Employers, academics and university technical staff hold students responsible for improving their employability. Thus, university technical staff state that students should participate in extracurricular activities and be oriented for work before finishing their studies.

> *A student has to know the services that his unit provides and maybe he has to spend some time to find out because there are many students who don't know that they have a career guidance service and they are missing out on many things (...) I would dare to tell you that students miss out on almost everything, in the sense that, man, they are focused on their studies* (Albert, university technical staff, male).

> *We operate on demand; that is, until the time comes, I am not going to worry about moving around and seeing what services there are. I think that work should be done well before the last year to get my CV on track. If I don't look for a job orientation until the last year, maybe I haven't been doing volunteer work that would be of interest to me* (Cai, university technical staff, female).

Extracurricular initiatives can emphasise student responsibility to ensure the success of graduates (Burke et al., 2017). According to Bennett (2019), most employability enhancement activities offered at higher education institutions are extracurricular, tend to be unpopular and attract students who need them least.

The influence of Employability Measures on Non-Traditional Learners

O'Connor and Bodicoat (2017) state that opportunities for graduates to improve their employability are not equally available to all. Indeed, students who are disadvantaged or who have low social, cultural and economic capital are not in a position to take advantage of such opportunities (Bathmaker et al., 2013).

The case of international mobility is illustrative. Universities call for international mobility placements to study at international universities. Stays abroad can confer a competitive advantage in the labour market (Zuhäl, 2015). However, non-traditional students may not take advantage of international mobility opportunities in the same way as their peers (Reid, 2016). Legna is a graduate with a dependant, and Gioser is a student with a physical mobility limitation. Both argue that they have encountered difficulties in undertaking an international mobility experience during their studies.

> *The thing is that now, because of my family situation, it can't be; otherwise, I would have already left with an Erasmus, a year off learning language and new things. I would have left, I am very clear about it (...) my mother is already old, I don't have any siblings either, she is alone, she is sick, that is to say, I cannot leave her alone like that* (Legna, graduate, male).

> *I didn't want to ask for it, because I didn't feel comfortable to do it (...) I took a long time to shower and dress a lot, to soap my head I couldn't raise my arms, I got tired (...) how can I go outside to depend on myself? In my house, there is always my mother or someone who can give you a hand, but going off by yourself? I didn't dare* (Gioser, student, male).

Some universities stipulate that students enrolled in bachelor's degrees must prove, before finishing their studies, that they have obtained a level of linguistic competence in a foreign language. One of the objectives of this measure is to promote employment among university graduates in the European labour market. Those who have family or work responsibilities have limited time to study the language during their studies, so they usually leave it until the end of their university career, often delaying the achievement of the degree. Adult students, who often enter the university system with a lower level of English, face many difficulties in acquiring this competence. Also, some students report that the cost of tuition, class attendance and examinations is a significant financial hardship.

> *If it is so compulsory for me, to get my degree, to have English, if it is as important as organic chemistry, put it in the same plan, in the curriculum. You put organic chemistry and B1 in English, but don't tell me "take your B1 and bring it from an academy" (...) to pay for all those things, I have to pull my savings* (Botico, student, male).

To carry out the curricular practices, the university establishes measures for students with special academic needs, to try to adjust to their needs. Most students say that these measures are essential. The employers interviewed consider that internships can be a positive measure for the insertion of non-traditional students, as they bring the business world closer to profiles that are more difficult to insert.

> *They have a problem when they come in. Now, once they enter and are known, they usually have no problem again. That is to say, at the moment they have problems... "this one is Dominican, this one is from I don't know where, we'll see", but when you know him, and you see how he works, you see how he gets involved in that company, if there is work he's not going to miss it* (Arte, private employer and university teacher, male).

As Tomlinson (2017) points out, the formal and informal experience at university can significantly improve students' employability. However, the literature shows that non-traditional students face financial pressures, family responsibilities and other significant study constraints (Reay et al., 2009), which result in more time constraints than traditional students (Devlin et al., 2012). In addition, non-traditional students have few opportunities to socialise or gain alternative social and cultural experiences (Crozier et al., 2008). Boti, an adult student, says that he has difficulty participating in such activities because of time constraints, as he combines work and study.

> *I have not asked to participate in more things because of lack of time, because I come here in the afternoon, and in the morning I work. Besides, I've had to adapt my schedule, that's a tremendous story. I come in at a quarter to seven in the morning (...) so that I can leave at two or so so that I can be here at three. That way, for four years; and at the weekends, to study and prepare your work* (Boti, student, male).

Improving employability by focusing on extracurricular activities implies a deficit model that highlights the shortcomings of working-class students. It fails to recognise the structural constraints faced by the most disadvantaged and vulnerable students (O'Connor & Bodicoat, 2017).

The Development of Employability under the Democratic Mission of the University

Universities are committed to economic goals and market interests which perpetuate inequities and fail to address the needs of diverse student groups (Apple, 2005; Wilderson III, 2012). While some participants argued that the functions of the university should be above the needs of the market, they made no mention of an approach to employability that takes into account factors such as social class, gender or ethnicity.

> *... to train people for the productive system, no, no. The university has to be above that. The productive system, what companies need, depends on factors and policies that do not necessarily coincide with the politics of what we do at University* (Popy, university technical staff, male).

The concept of meritocracy is detrimental to non-traditional students (Gibson, 2015), obscuring that opportunities for graduates to improve their employability are not equally available to all. There is evidence that inequality in higher education persists for many students after graduation (Finnegan et al., 2014; Pitman et al., 2019), suggesting that inequalities found in universities are reproduced in the labour market. According to Martínez (2013), higher education institutions must avoid competitive efficiency and discriminatory academic excellence, more typical of technocratic models that rely on assumptions of school meritocracy. Claudia is a recent graduate, who has taken courses and obtained accreditation for language skills to "fill out" her curriculum and be able to meet demands that respond to external interests. Her testimony also reflects the lack of professional objectives and a lack of meaning in her actions.

> *Well, the truth is, I have no idea. I know that this year I've been studying English, I've been taking courses to "fill in", so to speak, my CV, but I don't exactly know what to do* (Claudia, graduate, female).

Sanders-McDonagh and Davis (2018) confirm that radical pedagogies increase students' critical skills, personal awareness, knowledge and confidence, enabling them to perform better

in the academy and the labour market. The university can promote the reflection of individuals on their past life experiences and their impact on the present self, with the awareness of class and gender inequalities as "being different", as well as reflection on their future self and its transformations (O'Neill et al., 2018). Non-traditional students have stories that reflect the exclusion and invisibility they have suffered:

> *I come from X [the neighbourhood with the highest poverty rate in the city], I live there, my parents are from there (...) People studied knowing that the normal thing was to have a career, but I studied knowing that it was the abnormal thing (...) it is strange that you, being a woman, being a Roma, and from a marginal neighbourhood, it is strange that you are intelligent and you like science* (Lore, graduate, female)

For Freire (2009), education as a political project of freedom is key the oppressed developing a discourse free from the domination of their cultural heritage, while for Giroux (2014), critical thinking is the backbone of true democracy. Sanders-McDonagh and Davis (2018) argue that critical pedagogies work to disrupt the neoliberal narrative and help correct the persistent inequalities faced by non-traditional students. In this context, innovative and progressive teaching methods are crucial. The students interviewed emphasised the need to carry out activities that encourage reflection and participation, as they consider that these activities have been very scarce during their training. For example, Alejandro describes a good practice of a philosophy class, in which students develop an active role in their learning, favouring critical thinking and involvement:

> *The speaker gives his or her vision of these texts, and then there is a round table discussion around what is going to be talked about so that the speaker becomes one more of the classroom. A little bit we distort the idea of teacher-student, that hierarchy that is sometimes unfavourable to education (...) philosophy can be given in a different way to how it is usually given at university* (Alejandro, student, male).

Botico states that, during his time at the university, he has never engaged in debates or perceived the values traditionally associated with this institution.

> *What there is a lot of books, notes, slides; but I have not seen the values that are traditionally associated with the university, I have never seen them encourage a debate, not only on the political issue but on the very subject of our work as a pharmacist* (Botico, student, male).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to understand the development of employability at the university level and its impact on non-traditional students. This has included identifying the approach to employability developed by the university. Employers and university staff believe that education must adapt to evolution and change caused by market dynamics through human capital formation (Walsh & Powell 2018). Employers and university staff consider that the university has shortcomings in this respect. To address this situation, they propose the development of policies and practices to improve relations between universities and the labour market. According to Jackson (2016) and Kendall and French (2018), employability, understood as the acquisition of key competences, does not fully capture the complexity of

preparation for work and eludes the social dimension, issues of cultural capital and unequal power relations between individuals and groups.

The employers interviewed put the responsibility for access to employment on the university graduates themselves. This is consistent with the contributions of Veld et al. (2015) and Giroux (2014). Of particular relevance is the participation in extracurricular activities, following the "rules of the game" and the meritocracy present in the labour market. Thus, non-traditional students must commit themselves to an organisational plan that responds to external interests, with those who do not understand or respond to these rules being considered guilty or problematic. This situation reflects the ideological power at stake and the limited role of students (Reid, 2016). Furthermore, according to O'Connor and Bodicoat (2017), basing improved employability on extracurricular activities is reduced to a deficit model of what working-class students lack and does not recognise the structural limitations faced by those less advantaged.

This research has further sought to understand the influence of employability measures on non-traditional students. These students often face financial pressures and family and work responsibilities that make it difficult for them to participate in the activities offered by the university, thus placing them in a precarious position in today's labour market. Therefore, opportunities for students to improve their employability, such as international mobility experiences or language proficiency accreditation, are not equally available to all.

Internships can be a measure for the insertion of non-traditional students, being important to establish internships in all degrees and to dispose of indicators that guarantee their quality. The university has established measures aimed at alleviating the difficulties encountered by non-traditional students, such as having priority in the choice of the internship centre or adaptations for obtaining linguistic competence. However, the development of employability should not be limited to such measures and should recognise the power relations in which it is embedded.

Lastly, it was analysed the development of the university's employability according to its democratic mission. The participants recognised that the role of the university must go beyond the demands of the market. However, they do not refer to the influence of social factors, individual characteristics or unequal power relations on the employment outcomes of graduates (Clarke, 2018; Kendall & French, 2018). This reflects a market-oriented concept of employability and the fact that issues related to social inclusion are overlooked in debates on employability. Non-traditional students are disadvantaged if universities perpetuate the meritocracy of labour market dynamics. Institutions would inadvertently reproduce social inequalities if they respond only to economic objectives above any mission as a democratic public sphere.

Non-traditional students often try to "fill in" their curricula by adapting to ideals of meritocracy and competitiveness prevailing in the labour market without attributing meaning to their actions. Thus, students reflect a lack of sense of agency, confidence and self-awareness. The attitude of critical thinking necessary for a truly democratic society is often not promoted at University (Giroux, 2014). Too often it does not offer a space for debate and for promoting self-reflection on life experiences, the influence of context of origin, class and gender inequalities on present and future "self". These practices foster students' critical skills, self-management of their own lives, and help correct the inequalities that non-traditional students face (Martínez, 2013; O'Neill et al., 2018; Sanders-McDonagh & Davis, 2018).

Neo-liberalism permeates the current political, economic and social project of our societies, so the inequality it causes transcends the field of action of universities. Reducing this influence would be a much more global political task. Nevertheless, it is fair to recognise that the measures being taken in institutions to respond to non-traditional students help to resolve specific barriers for those students, always within neoliberal frameworks.

The dominant concept of employability represents a neo-liberal version (Brown et al., 2003) that assumes subtle mechanisms of exclusion and prevents true inclusion. It is necessary to reconfigure this concept and apply an alternative lens that makes visible the power relations at stake. If universities are to have a social impact and prosper as inclusive institutions, they must promote practices that are in line with their democratic mission. Consequently, in the words of Freire (2009), critical pedagogy must be understood as a practice of freedom, for the awareness and liberation of the oppressed. In this way, students can learn to become individual and social agents and, in doing so, help to correct persistent inequalities.

This research has some limitations. One of them is the difficulty to get the employers' responses go beyond political correctness and describe their companies' actual practices, when dealing with non-traditional graduates. In this sense, cross-checks (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) have been used to ensure the greatest possible sincerity in the responses. In addition, the study is based on interviews from one single university in Spain, which make it difficult to generalise based on the findings. However, the opinions and experiences presented in this paper may be transferable to other similar contexts, considering two complementary dimensions. On the one hand, neoliberal policies are having an increasing impact on many institutions and national governments worldwide, so the findings of this study could be useful in national and international debates on higher education. On the other hand, contrasting the opinions of students/graduates with those of employers/staff can help to better understand the problem of the employability of non-traditional students and assess the existing challenges to their full inclusion.

Acknowledgments

Study carried out as part of the EMPLOY project, Improving the employability of non-traditional students in higher education, funded by the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 Programme (Ref. 2014-1-UK01-KA203-001842). The information and perspectives provided in this article reflect only the authors' views, not the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the institutions nor the individuals of the European Union can be held responsible for the views expressed in this text.

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Maltese Educators' Perceptions of Democracy, Equality and Justice in Multicultural Education

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Abstract

The perceptions and attitudes of educators towards multicultural education are strongly correlated to the manner in which multicultural education is applied. Previous research indicates that culture undeniably has an effect on education, nonetheless, education administrators may not have enough knowledge about multicultural education practices. The aim of the study was to identify the perceptions and interpretations of multicultural teaching from seventeen respondents employed as educators. These educators were all Maltese, teaching Maltese as a second language to adult learners who originated from diverse cultural backgrounds and were living in Malta. The researcher used a qualitative case study design of online interviews to identify the practices that educators perceive to be the best in promoting effective multicultural education. Based on content analysis, the key concepts and activities defined as effective in maintaining multicultural education performance include equality, democracy and justice. Multi-ethnic teaching offers the opportunity to equitably consider and accept divergent viewpoints, which in turn allows proper cohesion not only among students but also educators. Indeed, multi-ethnic education is essential; individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences deserve equality, and community groups need proper representation. This research thus concludes that the majority of teachers agree that practices such as ensuring equality, democracy and justice for all learners regardless of their ethnic, gender, or religious context are of high significance in encouraging inclusion, multicultural education, and student success.

Keywords: democracy, equality, good practice, justice, multicultural teaching, teachers' perspectives

Introduction

With the disappearance of boundaries due to globalization and migration, the concept of homogeneity amongst nations has been extremely fragmented, resulting in most of the countries becoming multicultural. For generations, Malta has used its strategic location in the centre of the Mediterranean between the European continent and Africa to support the Maltese people as a remote small island on the outskirts of Europe, with basically minimal natural resources. Owing to abundant collaborations with Europe at all levels, Maltese students, teachers, and administrators, among others, have been introduced to new concepts, current thoughts, and novel methodologies (Tabone & Nardelli, 2014).

In the last decade, Malta has seen a rise in the number of immigrants arriving by sea, with 2019 being quite a milestone year in relation to the number of people who disembarked in Malta upon being rescued in the Central Mediterranean. Most of the refugees, fleeing from North African countries such as Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, sailed over on smugglers' boats. Crammed into overcrowded, dangerous boats, thousands drowned, causing the Mediterranean Sea to become a mass graveyard. As a result, Mediterranean countries such as Malta, Italy, and Spain were required to enhance their rescue operations. Sudan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Libya, Nigeria and Somalia are among the main nationalities of individuals disembarked in Malta (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020). Over 25,000 refugees have arrived on the shores of Malta since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Schumacher, 2020). This figure equates to 5% of the population of Malta, which is currently close to 500,000. Given the small size of the country, this influx can be understood geographically as 250 refugees per square mile (Schumacher, 2020). To put this in perspective, this nominal figure would be equal to 18 million refugees landing in the US. The foreign population in Malta was 98,918 in 2019, which is more than eight times its foreign population in 2005 of 12,112, or 3% of the total population (UNHCR, 2020).

Both the significant migration of people from all over Europe and beyond and the global economic recession have been viewed as significant threats to the well-being of the Maltese population (Baldacchino, 2009). As Mitchell (2002) argues, developing their own national identity required the Maltese to rise from the darkness of centuries of colonial rule, and many worry that they could once again lose their hard-earned identity. While humane understanding and respect for one another is one of the greatest ethical principles, literature suggests that, "the persistent barriers of racism, fear, ignorance and imaginative stereotypes remain constant obstacles to fruitful human relations" (Cuccioletta, 2001, p. 1). These barriers, which could arise in Malta, often lead to cultural inequity, xenophobia, and economic instabilities within and across social classes (Lee, 2007).

Owing to this influx of immigrants to Malta, the racial and cultural make-up of schools, workplaces and communities has risen. Social shifts in the school system have also been reported, calling for changes in educational methods and approaches (J. Banks & C. Banks, 2019). Only in recent years have many expatriates felt the need to learn Maltese as a second language (ML2). Although foreign adults have demonstrated an interest in ML2 classes and thus increased their demand, there is a notable lack of linguistic and multicultural research and no previous large-scale examinations on ML2 teaching and learning (Żammit, 2019). Moreover, before the influx of expatriates in Malta, Maltese teachers were trained to teach Maltese as a first language to Maltese mono-cultural native speakers. It was only in 2014 that many teachers began extending it to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. A

postgraduate training programme in Teaching Maltese as a Foreign Language started recently in 2018.

Multi-ethnic teaching aims to prepare learners for a constantly diversifying society and to elevate their ability to communicate with other people by engaging them fully in the learning process and supporting their encounters in a safe classroom environment. Successful teaching in multicultural class settings calls for culturally sensitive approaches and the creation of an equal chance for academic accomplishment and victory and individual development for each learner (Kahraman, 2017). According to Polat and Kiliç (2013), multicultural teaching incorporates tasks purposed to move away from a culturally dependent mentality, generate sensitivity for different approaches to life, create respect for other people, and the potential of forming neutral opinions by assessing evidence and arguments, self-criticism and intellectual curiosity. According to Kahraman (2017), teachers have a primary role in implementing multicultural teaching that involves opinions like peace, respect, equality and equal chances of success. The teachers' attitudes and perceptions concerning multi-ethnic teaching are openly linked to how they enact multi-ethnic teaching; that is, how they incorporate the variations in the class into the teaching procedures on mutual principles (Kahraman, 2017). Depending on this information, it is right to deduce that educators' awareness and desirable outlooks on multi-ethnic teaching will permit them to attain a higher success level for each learner.

Problem and Purpose Statement

The overall problem and purpose of this research is to ensure multicultural education and teaching effectiveness. Teachers need to assess and constantly change their approaches (Acar-Ciftci, 2019). Sharma (2005) stated that the most efficient educators are the ones that can learn the learners' cultures and beliefs. Teachers have the task of assessing their attitudes, views and partiality that can influence the learners' educational encounter. In the ML2 setting, the purpose of this research is to assess the views and attitudes of the educators' multicultural teaching. Research demonstrates the great impact of culture on education; however, several Maltese teachers do not have enough awareness of multicultural teaching since this immigration issue is current (Triandafyllidou, 2016). The information collected from this research is expected to contribute to the existing studies on the implementation of multi-ethnic teaching methods through the study of ML2 teaching and learning programme.

Literature Review

By reviewing the literature, the current research reflects on the philosophy and experience of defining multicultural education practices among educators. The literature review section assesses the advantages and disadvantages of the approach and the practices of multicultural teaching programmes.

Multiculturalism

A diverse community should be represented in each institutionalised learning system, including students, curricula, values, norms, and staff (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2014). This concept was the foundation of multicultural teaching, with the objective that each learner should have similar opportunities for learning regardless of language, gender, race, or social class. By providing comprehensive models focused on the goal of fair opportunity for education and social progress, researchers developed teaching hypotheses based on a bed of critical thought, social justice and equal opportunities (Tarman & Tarman, 2011). Currently, inclusive teachers affirm the objectives of inclusive education to improve curricula, encourage multicultural awareness, create multicultural cultures in learning institutions, cultivate self-concepts,

enhance understanding and establish relationships (Ruggs & Hebl, 2012). These objectives can be accomplished as cultural diversity is perceived to be a resource in the teaching industry and can also enable educators to recognise and embrace differences while building a unified and secure learning organization.

The multiculturalism notion involves cultural aspects like awareness of religious dimension, education, social class, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, language, ethnic background and race. According to Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014), while there are several types of multiculturalism, there is usually a possibility of integrated thinking as it identifies the availability of ethnic groups in a state and that such situations imply a community that encourages different ethnic groups to develop on their own. Recognising and accepting diversity, instead of just denying it, and not dragging all populations to one level is a better approach compared to the former. There are several examples of multicultural teaching from various academics working in this field (Aydin & Tonbuloglu, 2014; J. Banks & C. Banks, 2019; Basbay & Kagnici, 2011).

Banks and Banks (2019) defined inclusive teaching as teaching purposed to acknowledging and introducing tolerance and respect for variations in cultural aspects, language, religion, colour, ethnicity, social class, disability, sexual orientation and age. Depending on the description, it is justified to describe inclusive teaching as a procedure for developing equivalent teaching chances which enable ethnic diversities to set democratic aspects through opposing other forms of assimilation and racism and valuing all variations (Basbay & Kagnici, 2011). Ultimately, multicultural teaching means being sensitive to multiculturalism in teaching and considering diversities by allowing multiculturalism in teaching approaches and not specialising in formal teaching for every cultural population (Basbay & Kagnici, 2011). Malta is a nation with a cogent educational structure that is beginning to incorporate more inclusive approaches.

The research was conducted in Malta. The age group for compulsory education in Malta is between 5 and 16 years old. This is described in Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta (The Education Act, 1988) and subsequent reforms. Mandatory education includes six years of primary education followed by five years of secondary education. At the completion of compulsory schooling, students can continue their education in post-secondary and tertiary schools. This study focuses on ML2 in tertiary or post-secondary education. Research on ML2 within the post-secondary/tertiary education sector in Malta is sorely lacking, with minimal evidence of notable data within the field (Camilleri Grima, 2015; Camilleri Grima & Żammit, 2020; Żammit, 2019a; Żammit, 2019b). This study is therefore imperative in providing and discussing educators' perspectives and attitudes towards adults' multicultural education.

The Benefits and Limitations of Multiculturalism in Teaching

According to Ameny-Dixon (2004), the strengths of multicultural teaching include emphasising concepts such as justice, equality and democracy; preventing intercultural disagreements by enabling and promoting the existence of varying populations of the community and creating a societal system where individuals live in harmony; increasing productivity and ensuring the ethical and intellectual growth of each person; increasing the productive problem-solving competencies by adopting several varying views to address the issue; increasing the desirable associations between individuals by attaining common values and goals; decreasing prejudice by bringing together various people and allowing them to interact; and revitalising communities with the richness of varying cultures and assisting in the creation of a refined world view.

The most disapproving view of multicultural teaching in previous research is its incomplete definition. The most solid definition by the advocates of the term is Banks' (2015) description which asserts a concept, a change drive and a procedure. Since the definition is so universal, it develops a fault permitting the experts to translate it when and however they want. Several researchers who have studied multicultural teaching have stressed ethnicity and race and neglected other variations like social class, language, religion and gender (Furman, 2008).

Additionally, several types of research conducted with educators who are implementing multicultural teaching have demonstrated that they do not believe in multicultural teaching practices, they are not given substantial aid from the learning settings in which they work, and they do not have enough awareness of how to practise multicultural teaching (Banks, 2015). However, placing an overemphasis on defining multiculturalism might have unintended and inequitable outcomes. Although people have several identities, overstressing racial and ethnic individualities makes the characters primary and separates the minority groups from the majority ethnic group, which results in threats against the integrity of the social and state order. Multiculturalism is a concept dependant on ethnic beliefs and states that no ethnic group is better. However, each culture sees its own beliefs, perspectives, norms and values to be better than the others. In spite of these contradictory perspectives, establishing a multicultural attitude among people is significant in keeping the social order and safeguarding state unity and honesty (Banks, 2015).

The Role of Teachers in Multi-ethnic Education

According to Basbay and Kagnici (2011), along with individuals who view multiculturalism as a desirable and reactive procedure, individuals are criticising the approach by stating that it could result in worsening the social system. Just as all procedures are linked to education, educators have a vital task in comprehending and enacting multicultural teaching. Sharma (2005) asserted that educators might intentionally or unintentionally participate in traditional educational activities and procedures as they do not comprehend the linguistic, social and racial diversities of the learners.

Mansikka and Holm (2011) in their assessment of educators' perceptions asserted that educators invest too little time in knowing more about their adult learners; therefore, they have extremely limited knowledge about them. They also asserted that teachers make assumptions about learners' encounters from cultural minority populations because of other educators' opinions and the fact that they might not have educated such learners in their past lessons. Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014) stressed the significance of training teachers that can create educational schemes beginning from preschool to identify an educational infrastructure that will enact a multicultural educational structure. According to Washington (2003), educators require three vital fundamental competencies, including personal comprehension, comprehension of other people's cultures and multicultural academic requirements. According to Basbay and Kagnici (2011), out of the qualifications identified by the National Education Ministry, the ones linked to valuing, respecting and comprehending learners, getting to know more about the learners, educational diversification by considering people's variations and connecting significance to international and state values require that educators are at a particular level regarding multiculturalism. Sharma (2005) pointed out the importance of teacher candidates' potential to improve class environments by recognising and unifying diversity, and that educators should be required to have these attributes.

According to Mansikka and Holm (2011), education aims to concentrate on rather than regulate the learners, accepting them as they develop their skills, and that, as a result, learners require

teachers to naturally consider multiculturalism and provide multicultural teaching. The primary teaching and learning principles necessitate defending learners against any form of discrimination, including sexism, prejudice and racism. Therefore, educators constantly examine their perceptions, partiality and prejudices which can impact learners' encounters. To become a successful teacher, one has to examine and continuously transform him/herself.

Bigatti et al. (2012) stated that for teachers to practice multiculturalism, they have to present more than just course content about diversities. It calls for enabling a progressive and inclusive class environment, feeling the interaction between the learners, and promoting the learners' potential of learning by assisting varying educational approaches and analysis. Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014) posited that teachers can develop the learners' ethnic, linguistic and cultural knowledge, substantiate their confidence and growth, educate them on the significance of tolerance and inclusiveness, inspire them to interact and work with individuals who differ from them and offer them more efficient teaching by the stated methods. Depending on these statements, it can be deduced that educators have an important task in the initiation and enactment of multicultural teaching, depending on the environment and schedules.

Educators' Perceptions of Multicultural Teaching

Educators' opinions and their trends concerning culturally different learners in the classroom are vital elements in education, inspiration and making differences in teaching among learners irrespective of their beliefs, language, ethnicity, gender and age. The attitudes and opinions impact the educators' expectations and treatment of the students.

Nadelson et al. (2012) identified that the majority of their study participants comprehended and were knowledgeable of the varying concerns in multicultural teaching, and that they anticipated having culturally different learners in their classes. Despite being knowledgeable of the importance of the competencies in working with diverse student groups, new educators were indecisive of how well their teaching programmes had prepared them to teach learners with varying spiritual upbringings and cultures or to interact with the learners' families. According to Sharma (2005), educators who bring powerful biases and undesirable stereotypes concerning different populations have limited possibilities of developing the forms of professional behaviour and belief most related to multicultural responsiveness and sensitivity.

A different pertinent result from the research is that professional and personal opinions and views are notably linked to learners' cross-ethnic encounters. Potential educators with more cross-ethnic encounters have higher possibilities of developing positive professional and individual beliefs concerning different students (Sipra, 2013). Sipra (2013) asserted that educators who have an undesirable view of cultural subgroups have also demonstrated biased and differential treatment of learners depending on labels of gender variations and learners' last names. Educators should know the ethnic sensitivities by participating in the continued and critical procedure of assessing their perceptions, prejudices and biases that impact learners' learning encounters (Sipra, 2013). Since there is a lack of research in multicultural teaching and learning among multicultural adults learning ML2, this study aims to illustrate some teachers' perspectives on multicultural education.

Research Question

The aim of this study is to address the following question: What are the attitudes and perceptions of Maltese educators towards multicultural teaching?

Method

Study Design

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative case study design. The case study methodology is especially helpful when it is necessary to acquire an in-depth comprehension of a problem, occurrence, or phenomenon of concern in its natural actual setting (Yin, 2009). The primary challenge of using case studies is coming up with a comprehensive, complete and rich research that involves all study variances (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In this research, the conceptually-related case study approach was used to describe in detail the participants' perspectives of multicultural education, and to explore the educators' attitudes and experiences of a multicultural initiative in their class, including their awareness of how their pedagogy developed in regards to multicultural education within the real-life context of the ML2 class.

The researcher selected the qualitative interview method as it provides a unique, comprehensive understanding that is hard to obtain from closed survey research (Stoyanova, 2012). Participants were able to freely disclose their encounters and feelings without restrictions. While the figures and facts produced by quantitative studies are undoubtedly important, one can often be left searching for the "why" behind the statistics. This is the reason qualitative studies are important, as participants have the chance to freely elaborate on their responses.

Study Sample

The purposeful sample was used to select the participants for the online interviews. The research respondents comprised 17 educators teaching ML2 to adult learners from diverse cultural backgrounds in the beginning of the 2020–2021 scholastic year. The researcher knew these teachers would provide her with the most accurate and useful information concerning multiculturalism in ML2 adults' classes because most of them were her ex-colleagues and have been teaching ML2 to adults from diverse cultural backgrounds for more than eight years. Once the researcher obtained ethical permission from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malta, she approached these 17 teachers via email, where she provided an explanation of the study. Each participant was able to understand the nature of the study and subsequently approved their participation.

Each respondent willingly provided written consent, allowing the researcher to collect data from them and use it for academic purposes. The information was gathered based on the volunteering rule. The researcher selected teachers above 30 years old because they are more experienced and usually take on leadership roles in addition to their classroom duties (McHugh, 2019), and thus are more familiar with the bureaucratic, logistic, economic, and social structures of the school. Younger teachers, on the other hand, are usually incapable of providing adequate information, pertaining particularly to the issue in question as well as to teaching expertise (McHugh, 2019).

Study Tool and Process

In this research, the participants were asked both structured and unstructured inquiries during the interview. The inquiries were mainly purposed to identify the points of attitudes, views and opinions concerning multicultural education and multiculturalism. The interviews were conducted online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each interview lasted roughly one hour, totalling seventeen hours of interviews.

The following were the interview questions:

1. How long have you been teaching Maltese as a second language to adults?
2. What do you understand by multicultural teaching?
3. How do you teach Maltese as a second language to different cultural groups?
4. Do you use multicultural teaching when teaching Maltese as a second language?
5. Do you enjoy teaching multicultural students? Why do you enjoy/not enjoy?
6. What do you think are the benefits of multicultural teaching and learning?
7. Which challenges do you experience when teaching multicultural learners?
8. Does the Maltese as a second language curriculum contents cater for multiculturalism?
9. Should teachers vary their teaching approaches when teaching multicultural adult learners?
10. How do you deal with culturally-sensitive topics in class?
11. Do you try to understand the different background of the learners you teach?
12. What can be included in Maltese as a second language teaching to reach multicultural adult learners?

Validity and Reliability

The researcher used the member-checking tool after interviewing the respondents to determine construct validity by distributing the transcripts to the participants to check them out. In this way, the researcher tried to minimise any case of personal bias. According to Thomas (2017), member checks are vital in obtaining respondents' approval to use quotations especially where the anonymity of the respondents cannot be guaranteed.

The researcher also used purposeful sampling of the population to obtain a reliable sample size. The participants were teaching ML2 to adult learners who achieved different levels of learning, and were either teaching in schools or in private lesson formats (Patton, 2002). The researcher also ensured procedural precision and applied self-correcting techniques when using the member-checking tool. Verification strategies and systematic procedural precision are vital reliability tests in both qualitative and quantitative research (Morse et al., 2002).

Data Analysis

The interviews were recorded between the 19th and 22nd October 2020 and were later transcribed. The gathered information was analysed using the content evaluation approach and the findings were combined into reports. Identified themes have been proved by the Nvivo 10 software, which enables the researcher to explore more of the qualitative results, uncover deeper observations and create explicitly expressed, plausible conclusions supported by empirical evidence, while saving time and operating more effectively (Zamawe, 2015).

Findings

The interview evaluations indicated that the respondents agreed on the need for multicultural teaching and have a desirable outlook towards it. The most stressed concepts included democracy, justice and equality, and each respondent settled that individual variations have to be considered and are the richness of diversity and ethnicity. Among the most repeated practices were peace, respect and tolerance.

Equality as a Good Practice in Multicultural Teaching

The interview assessments identified that the word "equality" was reiterated thirty-eight times by the respondents, and it is the most utilised definition. Almost all of the seventeen

respondents stressed the concept of equality and addressed that multi-ethnic teaching promotes equality. Six respondents described multi-ethnic education while stressing equality. When I asked the participants what they understand by the term "multicultural teaching" during language lessons, a participant (P1) described multicultural teaching as follows:

> *By "multicultural teaching", I understand that during language lessons, teachers embrace all types of learners' distinction. This implies equitable teaching for all learners, regardless of their emotional, cognitive, physical, ethnicity, race, gender, language and religion variations* (Participant 1, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Another respondent's (P4) description of multicultural teaching once again stresses the concept of equality by stating:

> *Multicultural teaching in Maltese as a foreign language course provides, in the most general sense, the same opportunities for Maltese language learning to learners of diverse cultures, languages, religions and nationalities* (Participant 4, Interview: 19/10/2020).

All of the seventeen respondents asserted that the main strength and advantage of multicultural teaching is "*making sure there is equality*" (participant 5, Interview: 19/10/2020) and that it also results in peace. For instance, one respondent (P2) who views equality as a great benefit of multi-ethnic teaching claimed:

> *The main advantage of multi-ethnic education is to include every member of society in the educational system and to apply the inclusive approach to every learner* (Participant 2, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Likewise, another respondent (P3) explained the idea that the main benefit of multicultural teaching is ensuring equality with the statement:

> *I believe that the greatest benefit is not to abandon the learners of minority groups in our society to their fates but rather to support them and therefore to enable them to enjoy equivalent educational rights* (Participant 3, Interview 19/10/2020).

Various respondents argued that by creating a multicultural calendar for comprehending and celebrating diversity, they would encourage each group to voice their views equally and highlight the importance of major events in their country. One respondent (P5) indicated that the language course could contain topics such as equal rights of expression for each group/race and avoidance of prejudice and the traditional teaching method of using only the target language. At the same time, P7 asserted:

> *During my lessons, I try to reach varying societal groups/races equally. In fact, in my classroom, I encourage my students to translate Maltese words into their native language. I also allow them to show the way they write in their native language on online chats when the lessons are delivered online or on a whiteboard when the lessons are delivered in the classroom. Many students tell me that they see associations between Maltese and their native language but they cannot find any associations with regards to grammar as*

> *Maltese grammar is too Semitic whereas their native language grammar is not Semitic* (Participant 7, Interview 20/10/2020).

P7 used a translanguaging process whereby P7's multilingual learners used some of the vocabulary of their first language as an integrated communication mechanism (Canagarajah, 2011). Multilingualism is no longer seen as a limitation to acquiring a second language but as an opportunity (Hult, 2012). P7 is right in stating that since Maltese grammar is of a different language family and, according to Mifsud (1995), 95 percent of Maltese grammar is Semitic, it follows that learners cannot use the tranlanguaging process concerning Maltese grammar and their first language grammar.

A different respondent (P6) demonstrated his views concerning curriculum content as follows:

> *The language learning curriculum should respect differences, should give equal opportunity to all learners, and the substance of aspects such as social justice and democracy should be substantially addressed in the language curriculum. As a result, I do my utmost to be objective, unbiased and fair to my students* (Participant 6, Interview: 20/10/2020).

The respondents also mentioned the equality aspect of their training which can be encouraged to facilitate and spread multicultural teaching. One respondent (P11) asserted:

> *Teachers should be trained on the significance and advantages of multiculturalism in learning institutions, including concepts such as universal values, equality, culture and diversity. In addition to treating all students fairly, teachers should also treat all their native languages equally and encourage students to use and see connections between their native language and Maltese* (Participant 11, Interview: 21/10/2020).

Another respondent (P9) stressed, "*Systematised, structured and equitable multicultural teaching must first be implemented at school and then we teachers must adopt the same system in our language class*" (Participant 9, Interview: 20/10/2020).

Every respondent argued that different methods and activities should be extended to different social groups and stressed their significance. The respondents found that cases should still include the definition of equality and include comparisons. Respondent 14 gave her notion by stating:

> *There are many things that may be included in the language teaching environment for various students. Customs and public holidays in various religions (including Christmas Day, Vasanta Panchami, Eid Al-Fitr, Makar Sankrat, the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the Ramadan Feast) for different ethnic classes (Syrians, Serbian, whites, blacks, Asians, Indian, Kurds, etc.). All types of tasks opposed to prejudice; and reinforcing cultural equity should take their place in the classroom* (Participant 14, Interview: 22/10/2020).

A different respondent (P13) stated what can be done for varying groups as follows:

> *In project-dependent learning surroundings, all students can create homework and projects expressing their mother tongues and cultures. The United Kingdom is conducting this perfectly, so can we. Besides, teachers could stop utilising social studies classes as an instrument for assimilation and transforming them into higher-value classes where universal principles, including equality, social justice, pluralism and democracy, are promoted* (Participant 13, Interview: 21/10/2020).

An overall evaluation of the respondents' responses indicates that the concept of equality is emphasised and that there is an agreement on multi-ethnic teaching's significance in promoting equality.

Democracy as a Good Practice in Multicultural Teaching

The interview assessments indicated that all respondents stressed the idea of democracy and addressed the significance of multi-ethnic teaching in creating a democratic community. Two respondents stressed the concept of democracy while describing multicultural teaching. Respondent 8 described multicultural teaching as follows:

> *Multicultural teaching is a democratic reform initiative in which learners with various differences, including gender, language, religion and race, have equal rights to education* (Participant 8, Interview: 20/10/2020).

At the same time, P1 stated that it is the potential of people from varying cultures irrespective of their genders, races, religions and languages to carry on with their learning in the same educational institutions in the setting of social justice and democracy.

Five of the seventeen respondents said they were worried that multicultural teaching could lead to societal division and deteriorate solidarity. However, twelve teachers remarked that multi-ethnic teaching could, on the contrary, contribute to the development of democratic environments. One respondent (P1) demonstrated his perception by stating:

> *Multi-ethnic teaching does not separate a society or a community. Instead, in communities with variations, it assists them in surviving in more democratic models and settings* (Participant 1, Interview: 19/10/2020).

One of the most stated strengths and benefits of multicultural teaching is the potential of forming democratic environments. One respondent (P6) stated "*to be capable of applying concepts like democracy and equality in a healthier manner*" as a benefit of multicultural teaching, while respondent 12 stated "*to assist in developing notions like democracy, rights, brotherhood and tolerance*" and respondent 15 stated that "*it enables a democratic social order*". Again, respondent 16 stated that "*Attempting to utilise it in communities where democracy is not properly used might result in social conflicts*", stating the significance in democratic societies of the availability for multi-ethnic teaching to be implemented. The idea that integrating multi-ethnic teaching in the teaching curriculum can result in the creation of democratic consciousness was proposed by respondent 17 stating the benefits as follows:

> *There can be a chance of benefitting from varying ethnic groups, a democratic mindfulness for everyone will improve, a setting of peace and trust will be created away from issues and fear, it will result in ethnic*

> *interactions and result in social changes and advancements* (Participant 17, Interview: 22/10/2020).

A different respondent (Participant 10, Interview: 21/10/2020) demonstrated his/her perceptions on the issues by stating, "*I believe that a change to a more egalitarian teaching structure considering personal needs and variations can be the greatest benefit*". In stating what is suitable for a multi-ethnic teaching training curriculum for learning a second language, the concept of egalitarianism was stressed again. Egalitarianism is the doctrine that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities (Dworkin, 2000). Respondent 16 claimed the following:

> *Our language academicians who train the educators need to share that teaching should be done in democratic, social justice, respect and love settings, and these should be practised accordingly* (Participant 16, Interview: 22/10/2020).

An assessment of the respondents' remarks identifies that the concept of democracy is very often emphasised and that multicultural teaching's impacts on creating democratic societies and settings are frequently repeated.

Justice as a Good Practice in Multicultural Teaching

All ML2 teachers who participated in this study stressed the concept of justice and stated the significance of multi-ethnic teaching in enabling justice. Two respondents stated the notion while describing multi-ethnic teaching, and two others posited that multi-ethnic teaching is connected to the concept of social justice. Respondent 5 stated:

> *Multi-ethnic teaching involves accepting every student in our language class, irrespective of their race, gender, cultural backgrounds, languages and religions with their principles. It is the potential of approaching everyone with neutrality, tolerance and justice* (Participant 5, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Concerning the concepts that multi-ethnic teaching is connected to and its connection in establishing justice, two respondents expressed the following perceptions. Respondent 3 said:

> *Multi-ethnic teaching is linked to concepts like social justice, equality and differences, and it is asserted that multi-cultural teaching should be practised for communities and societies staying in peace* (Participant 3, Interview: 19/10/2020).

Respondent 9 stated that it is a model that initially appeared in the United States after the Civil War, yet it is also a hunt for solutions to eradicate social injustices in countries like the UK, Canada and the US, where the demographics shift with the growth in minority groups. Respondent 4 stated that teaching is linked to concepts like integration, minority rights, social injustices, differences, immigration, citizenship and democracy in this setting. The fact that multi-ethnic teaching emphasises the concept of justice and that it has a value that can identify justice in the community was identified as a strength of multi-ethnic teaching by four respondents. Respondent 13 stressed multi-ethnic teaching's significance for social justice and human rights; respondent 14 asserted that multi-ethnic teaching instils the statement of justice and equality to a participatory community; respondent 16 claimed that multi-ethnic teaching is the introduction of social justice in society; and respondent 17 defined the contribution to the

attitudes of self-esteem and justice. Social justice was defined as one of the appropriate aspects of enacting multi-ethnic educator training schedules. Respondent 6 stated as follows:

> *Respect to variations, equality of opportunities to learning and contents of aspects like social justice and democracy should be addressed abundantly in the language curriculum* (Participant 6, Interview: 20/10/2020).

An overall assessment of the responses indicates that the significance of multi-ethnic learning of a second language in creating social justice is frequently emphasised and considered to be vital. All respondents had favourable thoughts on multi-ethnic teaching. The majority of the respondents stressed that multi-ethnic learning contributes to creating communities with democratic values, equality and justice for everyone. Therefore, language educators should undergo training on multi-ethnic teaching for democratic communities.

Discussion

Multi-ethnic teaching is a research sector that helps learners acquire the awareness and competencies suitable for engaging in the democratic world and helps people of different ethnic groups to have equal chances for learning (Halvorsen & Wilson, 2010). This study aims to fill a gap in research by assessing teachers' perceptions of multi-ethnic teaching and practices and translating the findings in order to devise a training plan that will contribute to the development of just, democratic, and equal educational systems. Particularly, the evaluation of the research findings notes that each respondent asserted that multi-ethnic teaching is vital and suitable, and the seventeen educators stressed justice, democracy and equality on the issue of multi-ethnic teaching of a second language. The study results indicate that in addition to several other benefits, multi-ethnic learning promotes equality. This equality not only cuts across pedagogical areas, but also within social strata, ultimately helping to build cohesive relations among various nationalities.

The results concur with Sharma (2005), who identified that multicultural education considers each culture as equal and that no culture is superior to the others. Kahraman (2017) linked successful teaching in multi-ethnic classes to offering equal chances for academic successes and individual growth. Multi-ethnic teaching can be considered the first point in eliminating inequality in society because of the certainties in handling the existing educational curriculum's challenges and errors. In concurrence with the literature, the current research identifies the most stated practice in multicultural education as equality, and it was identified that multi-ethnic teaching would promote equal chances and the right to education for every learner.

The research also identifies democracy as one of the most repeated practices by the respondents. Likewise, Aydin and Tonbuloglu (2014) defined multi-ethnic teaching as a teaching and learning strategy founded on democratic elements and notions and identified the ethnic diversities in an interlinked society with ethnic pluralism. According to Mansikka and Holm (2011), the value of multi-ethnic teaching is usually proportionate with the democratic practices of the country. Banks (2015) asserted that among the multicultural teaching's strengths is its stress on practices like justice, equality and democracy. Multiculturalism in the education curriculum aims to democratise the curriculum and teacher's training to give everyone a more neutral and free perspective (Banks, 2015). Likewise, in the current research, the respondents claimed that multi-ethnic teaching would promote a democratic society and result in a democratic educational setting.

Justice is a different practice that most participants stressed in the current research. Sharma (2005) stated that multi-ethnic teaching helps the community become more just and tolerant and identified that it is richer than any of the constituents. According to Banks (2015), among the primary aims of educational systems that encourage multi-ethnic literacies is to assist students to develop democratic societies; develop knowledge and sensitivity and allow response. In the current research, the respondents, as in the literature findings, stated the significance of multicultural teaching in promoting justice, included the concept of justice in their descriptions of multi-ethnic teaching and connected multicultural teaching to the social justice concept.

Limitations

The study's limitation is that the researcher only used the approach of qualitative design to gather information, therefore limiting the validity and reliability levels. However, future studies should consider using a triangulation of different qualitative methods, including a combination of interviews, focus groups and discussions, thus reducing the limitations of using one approach.

Recommendations

The teachers in this study claimed that they were not given training in handling learners of different nationalities, given that this situation of immigration happened after the participants graduated. Properly created multi-ethnic training is important for pre-service educators' knowledge and outlook concerning multi-ethnic teaching and to successfully educate the learners. Thus, appropriate research should observe a plan that aids in the procedure so that educators are prepared both professionally and personally to work with learners from different cultural settings. Such training will offer frameworks to educators to think and talk about cultural diversities. Through awareness and the development of competences in multi-ethnic teaching, new educators will be empowered to strive to create systems and social arrangements in learning settings that encourage the practice of equality in and out of schools (Gorski, 2009).

The findings of the research are new, interesting and important, considering the lack of research in multicultural education for adult ML2 learners with different nationalities. This study raises some inquiries that should be addressed in future studies. Another limitation in this study is that language teachers talked about the importance of multicultural education that could happen in any subject, not just in ML2. Future researchers should interview educators concerning their ML2 teaching approaches, methods and learning surroundings before and after finishing their training programmes. This information will assist in establishing the impact of multicultural teaching specifically in ML2. Educational researchers should also assess learning institutions that have enacted strong multi-ethnic programmes and quality multi-ethnic professional educator development. Such research would offer samples of how multi-ethnic teaching is enacted in practice, both at the personal and school levels. It is vital to comprehend how learners and parents perceive the ML2 teaching programmes.

Conclusion

The desire for individuals of varying cultures and aspects to live with the same entitlements and each societal group to have similar and democratic structures make multicultural ML2 teaching necessary. Multi-ethnic teaching develops the possibilities of accepting that there are varying perspectives that are equal and helps people comprehend how each side feels.

Moreover, due to pressing circumstances such as the sporadic and growing pace of migration as experienced in recent years, the need for inclusive spaces has become more apparent. Changing demographics heighten the need for a multicultural shift in people's way of thinking among nations that embrace multiculturalism, especially as it relates to pedagogy. The current study identifies that most teachers acknowledge that practices like ensuring equality, democracy and justice among all learners irrespective of their cultural, racial or religious backgrounds is of great importance in promoting multicultural education and student success.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the seventeen participant teachers for their useful comments concerning their perceptions and interpretations to multicultural education.

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The editorial team would like to thank the following reviewers for their contributions to the peer review of this issue. Their dedication and assistance are greatly appreciated.

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ISSN: 2187-0594