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Inclusive Practices of In-Service Teachers: A Quantitative Exploration of a Southeast Asian Context

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Abstract: After more than two decades of the Salamanca Statement, discrimination and marginalization still exist. There is a need to implement inclusion to promote educational accessibility, quality, and equity for all to combat exclusion. As a result, inclusion challenged educational systems, especially teachers who are its primary implementers. Understanding the significant role of teachers in the parlance of the inclusive agenda is an essential area of inquiry; however, relatively less is known about it. This paper addresses the chasm by looking more profoundly into the teachers' skills and dispositions about inclusion. Through a cross-sectional survey, this paper examined and compared the Filipino and Thai in-service teachers' efficacy and attitudes about inclusion and its association with their intentions for inclusive practices. Data revealed that Filipino teachers have a generally higher level of positive attitudes, efficacy, and intentions for inclusive practices than their Thai counterparts. Also, there is a significant and positive correlation between the respondents' attitudes, efficacy, and intentions for inclusive practices. Considering the historical and cultural contexts, the results of the study construed a deeper understanding of the teachers' inclusive practices. Insights gathered from the study are instrumental in the examination and understanding of the teachers' role in the inclusive agenda.

Keywords: *Inclusive education, inclusive practices, teachers' role in the inclusive agenda, inclusion in Southeast Asia.*

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Introduction

The changing needs of the society continuously create a paradigm shift in the policies and program implementation of agencies in the global community. Specifically, the increasing plurality of learners has altered the landscape of educational systems as a response to the mandate of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) - education for all as an inherent human right. Heterogeneity has necessitated states to integrate inclusive education (IE) in its policies, curriculum, programs, and other capacity-building mechanisms. The implementation of IE is primarily influenced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). The same statement compelled schools to allow children with physical, cognitive, emotional, cultural, gender, and other conditions to be educated alongside their typically-developing peers (UNESCO, 1994).

Carrying out a just and robust IE is more than infrastructure and curricular modification. Its eventual success is dependent on how teachers in the regular settings view their role in the inclusive agenda- being its primary implementers (Del-Corro - Tiangco & Bustos, 2014; Forlin et al., 2014; Hecht et al., 2017; Kaur et al., 2016; Kuyini et al., 2018; Majoko, 2019; Muega, 2016). Positioned at the forefront of the inclusive agenda, teachers significantly contribute to the development of human potential (Ates & Kadioglu, 2017). One significant factor that enables teachers to become effective inclusive practitioner is to acquire the right disposition and skills to teach children with disabilities in the regular classrooms (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Hecht et al., 2017; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016), for example, the kind of attitude, efficacy, intentions, perspective, and concerns they hold about inclusion (Kaur et al., 2016; Loreman et al., 2014; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016; Sharma et al., 2012).

The seminal paper, which measures teachers' intentions for inclusive practices by Sharma and Jacobs (2016), puts into account the importance of behavior in the overall teaching practices of an inclusive practitioner. The framework of the

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quantitative tool is situated mainly in the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991) and the Social Cognitive Theory of Bandura (1986). For Hecht et al. (2017), teachers' behavior about inclusive practices is also impacted by their contexts. Teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices can also be attributed to several factors like social contexts, cultural differences, delivery modes, and educational systems (Hecht et al., 2017; Merz-Atalik et al., 2016; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

Hecht et al. (2017) explored the level of attitudes and efficacy for inclusive practices of Italian and Australian pre-service teachers. Both countries under study are towards the complete implementation of an IE at their national level. Further, the participants from the European-wide contexts showed a high level of efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices – even as early as teacher-preparation training. Hecht et al. (2017) also emphasized that while Italian teachers have significantly positive attitudes, a lower degree of concerns, and a higher level of intentions to implement inclusion compared to the Australian teachers, the aggregate data has to be analyzed using the cultural and historical perspectives of the countries under study.

This paper sought to problematize the inclusive practices of the other side of the spectrum – the setting of Asian and developing countries like the Philippines and Thailand. Specifically, it investigated the relationship of in-service teachers' attitudes, efficacy, and intentions for inclusive practices. This study is in the same vein with the paper of Yagata (2019), which voiced concerns about the Western conception of inclusive education being definitive worldwide; however, it may be less functional in another context. Therefore, the understanding, practice, disposition, and competencies of teachers from different contexts vary.

Teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices

A growing number of studies about teachers' role in the success of inclusive education is attributed to their teaching disposition and skills (Kumar, 2016). Specifically, recent studies have been exploring the relationship of the teachers' concerns, sentiments, attitudes, efficacy, and behaviors regarding inclusive practices (Loreman et al., 2008; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016; Sharma et al., 2012). Sharma and Jacobs (2016) established a connection between teachers' intentions and their attitudes and efficacy for inclusive practices. Similarly, the study of Hecht et al. (2017) offered an analysis of the relationship of teachers' efficacy and their attitudes for inclusive practices – in the context of a European setting. Moreover, Alaverdyan (2018) found evidence that the sentiments, attitudes, concerns, and efficacy of Armenian teachers rely on their exposure to inclusive practice during pre-service and in-service training.

Teachers' attitude is among the most crucial factors resulting in a successful inclusive education (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Forlin et al., 2011). Several papers suggest that a positive attitude towards inclusion results to a willingness to guide and support children with perceived differences in the general education settings (Brownell & Pajares, 1999; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Kuyini & Desai, 2007; Romi & Leyser, 2006; Soodak & Podell, 1993; Soodak et al., 1998; Urton et al., 2014). Further, literature also offered an explanation on the teachers' attitudes about inclusion and link on the severity of the learners' disability (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016), direct experiences in handling children with special needs (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Jordan et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2008), and favorable school climate (Sharma et al., 2012).

Meanwhile, Bandura (1986), as cited in Hecht et al. (2017) in a seminal study, defined efficacy as “*what you believe you can do with what you have under a variety of circumstances.*” Hence, the teachers' efficacy determines what kind of learning environment teachers will offer to the diverse class members. Gudek (2019) also cited the claim of Bandura (1997) that a person's outstanding delivery of a task is not only determined by a person's skill set but also the effective use of this skill set. An efficacious teacher will likely plan and implement ways to ensure the high learning success of every student. Conversely, a teacher who has a relatively low efficacy believes that his or her contributions in the implementation of inclusion will never be enough (Sharma et al., 2012). Thus, there is a general agreement that efficacy in teaching is a defining factor in how well the teacher will perform in an inclusive setting.

In the parlance of inclusive education, the Theory of Planned Behavior or TBP (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that attitude is inconclusive in determining how competent the teacher will be in fulfilling his or her role in the classroom. It is the person's intentions that predict actual behavior. A teacher's intentions for inclusive practices are significantly influenced by his or her attitudes and efficacy for inclusive practices. Hence, high efficacy, positive attitude, and strong intentions for inclusive practices should be taken into account in supporting teachers to become capable and competent inclusive practitioners.

The context

The Global Monitoring Report of the Education for All (EFA) concluded that learners from developing countries have minimal access to equitable and quality education (Forlin, 2013). The struggle is a result of the countries' difficulty to provide the basic educational needs of their learners and compounded by the inclusive agenda. Nonetheless, as signatories of the Salamanca Statement, developing countries have implemented the inclusive policy through legislation and other mechanisms (Forlin & Chambers, 2011), even in the midst of lack of budget, inadequate

knowledge about the agenda, insufficient staff training, and reliance on international debts (Armstrong et al., 2011; Forlin, 2013). The same struggle threatens the Philippines and Thailand with the need to implement inclusion.

Inclusive education in the Philippine setting

A developing country, the Philippines is still in its advent in terms of implementing IE (Muega, 2016). However, as a signatory of the EFA framework of action (UNESCO, 1990) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), it takes considerable efforts to provide a rich school experience and optimal learning to diverse learners.

The practice of inclusive education in the country is primarily enshrined in Section 8 of the Department of Education Order No. 43 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Department of Education, 2013). The policy provides a clear framework to achieve inclusiveness in designing and implementing the country's educational agenda. To address the needs of the diverse learners, it includes programs but is not limited to: (a) Program for the gifted, (b) Program for the learners with a disability, (c) Madrassah Program, (d) Indigenous Peoples' Education Program, (e) Program for learners under challenging circumstances (Bustos et al., 2014). The policy is in response to the call of quality and equity of education for Filipino learners.

The Philippines has an established policy on the implementation of IE; however, it still grapples with the issue of quality and durability of its implementation (Muega, 2016). Muega (2016) reported that one factor that has to be discovered is the teachers' appreciation and value of inclusion. The same author also emphasized that general education teachers are not equipped to carry inclusion in their classrooms and that it is vital to challenge school communities to develop appreciation and value of promoting the presence of diverse learners. The direct appeal for teachers to respect diversity is valued, which stems from a positive attitude, self-efficacy, and right behaviors toward inclusive practices.

Inclusive education in Thailand

The provision for the educational rights of Thai with disabilities gained momentum in 1994 through the enactment of The Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act (Carter, 2006). Inclusion in the country, however, gained momentum after eight years through the National Education Act of B.E. 2542 (1999). Additionally, the Thai government, through the Ministry of Education, has put up 309 model inclusive schools in 2004. Since then, inclusive schools have been increasing (Adams Hill & Sukbunpant, 2013). Not every school, however, is ready to provide a learning space for learners with disabilities in the general setting (Kaur et al., 2016).

Further, the Thai government has enacted its National Education Plan for the Year 2017-2036, which encapsulates the country's primary goals – one of which is educational accessibility, equality, and quality through inclusion (UNESCO, 2009). However, the Thai government has a different definition of inclusion from that of UNESCO. Thai policy-makers believe that learners who can sit in the class with their typically-developing peers stay in the regular classroom – and those who are not included in the criteria opt for other placement (Vibulpatanavong, 2018). This scenario puts the teachers in a confusing role in the implementation of inclusion.

Pursuing this further, Thai teachers are going through difficulties in implementing inclusion like their Filipino counterparts. This struggle is attributed to the lack of training of implementers, insufficient funding, and inadequate support (Kaur et al., 2016; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). One example that created confusion among teachers in the country's implementation of inclusion is the use of SEAT (where S is for students, E is for the environment, A is for activities, and T is for Tools) Project. The initiative has sought to create a broad policy for the implementation of the agenda, but teachers were not prepared in terms of curriculum adaptation and assessment (Vorapanya, 2008).

The study

This paper sought to investigate the following: (a) Filipino and Thai in-service teachers' level of efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices; and (b) the relationship of the participants' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices. Research about the implementation of inclusive education among developing countries is scarce (Hosshan, Stancliffe, Villeneuve, & Bonati, 2019). Specifically, there is a dearth of research in the understanding of the teachers' critical role in the eventual success of the inclusive agenda. Insights from this study will inform the implementation and evaluation of effective inclusive practices of different countries, specifically, in the understanding of the teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices.

Methods

Design

This quantitative study addressed the research questions through a survey. A survey allows the researcher to explore patterns and relationships of a statistical profile (Cohen et al., 2002). Specifically, it employed a cross-sectional survey to investigate variables among sub-groups (Visser et al., 2000). A direct administration of the survey (Frankeal et al.,

2012) allowed the researchers to gather 425 responses from Filipino and Thai in-service teachers. Further, descriptive and inferential analyses were employed to answer the research questions.

Respondents

Through purposive sampling, a total of 425 in-service teachers participated in this study: where 300 are Filipino teachers (as shown in Table 1), and 125 are Thai in-service teachers (as shown in Table 2). The majority of the participants are from public schools who at least earned a bachelor's degree.

Table 1. Profile of Filipino Teacher-participants

| | Frequency | % |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Institutional Agency | | |
| Public School | 189 | 63.0 |
| Private School | 106 | 35.3 |
| Both Public School and Private School | 5 | 1.7 |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| College/Bachelor's Degree | 275 | 91.7 |
| Master's Degree/Units | 22 | 7.3 |
| Doctorate/PhD | 3 | 1.0 |

Table 2. Profile of Thai Teacher-participants

| | Frequency | % |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Institutional Agency | | |
| Public School | 34 | 27.2 |
| Private School | 91 | 72.8 |
| Both Public School and Private School | 0 | 0 |
| Educational Attainment | | |
| College/Bachelor's Degree | 122 | 97.6 |
| Master's Degree/Units | 3 | 2.4 |
| Doctorate/PhD | 0 | 0 |

Instrumentation

A three-part international survey tool was used to gather data: (a) Teacher's Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) (Sharma et al., 2012), (b) Attitudes to Inclusion Scale (AIS), and (c) Intentions to Teach in an Inclusive Setting (ITICS) Scale by Sharma and Jacobs (2016), respectively.

The TEIP tool is an 18-item scale that measures the teachers' perceived efficacy for inclusive practices such as the teachers' self-efficacy, efficacy in collaboration with other stakeholders, and efficacy in managing the learners' behavior. The participants' degree of acceptance of the statements is determined through a 6-point Likert scale. The tool has three sub-dimensions with the alpha coefficient of 0.93, 0.85, and 0.85, respectively, which verify its reliability of use across context (Sharma et al., 2012). The total alpha coefficient of the tool is 0.93 (Yada, 2015). This study is limited to its inability to investigate the three sub-dimensions pertaining to the participants' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices. Thus, it interpreted the results to describe the participants' efficacy for inclusive practices.

The participants' mean scores in their efficacy for inclusive practices were interpreted in the light of the following threshold values: .00 to 1.83 as "strongly disagree," 1.84 to 2.67 as "disagree," 2.68 to 3.51 as "somewhat disagree," 3.52 to 4.35 as "somewhat agree," 4.36 to 5.19 as "agree," and 5.20 to 6.0 as "strongly agree."

The second tool, AIS, measures the teachers' attitudes about inclusive practices. This newly developed tool does not only focus on specific disabilities, which are the characteristics of the previously published tool. Further, the tool suggests that the higher the score, the more positive the respondents' attitude is about inclusion. The tool is composed of 10 statements with a 7-point Likert scale to determine the respondents' degree of agreement (Sharma & Jacobs, 2016).

The third tool, ITICS, a newly constructed and validated tool by Sharma et al., (2016), measures the respondents' intentions for inclusive practices. The third tool includes seven statements with a 7-point Likert scale to determine the respondents' degree of agreement. Further, both AIS and ITICS yielded acceptable levels of reliability of $>.74$, and the two-factor scales demonstrated structural validity across different contexts (Sharma et al., 2016).

The tool was translated for Thai respondents while the original version was used for their Filipino counterparts. The researchers conducted a pilot testing of the survey tool in both settings, and reliability was determined by calculating the alpha coefficient. Results yielded suggests excellent reliability of the tools used (as shown in Table 3).

Table 3. Level of reliability of the three-part survey tool

| Constructs | Philippines | Thailand |
|------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| TEIP | $\alpha = 0.95$ | $\alpha = 0.95$ |
| AIS | $\alpha = 0.85$ | $\alpha = 0.93$ |
| ITICS | $\alpha = 0.93$ | $\alpha = 0.90$ |

In terms of the participants' mean scores in the measure of their attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices, the following threshold values were employed in the interpretation of the results: 1.00 to 1.86 as "extremely unlikely," 1.87 to 2.73 as "very unlikely," 2.74 to 3.60 as "somewhat unlikely," 3.61 to 4.47 as "not sure agree," 4.48 to 5.34 as "somewhat likely," 5.35 to 6.21 as "very likely," and 6.22 to 7.00 as "extremely likely."

Process

In the Philippines, permission to conduct the study was secured from the Department of Education. In Thailand, the researchers acquired permission to conduct a study from the district school head. After receiving the approval letter from the agencies' gatekeepers, the survey was conducted among schools identified (Central Luzon and National Capital Region, Philippines, Pattani, Yala, and Southern Thailand). With the help of school principals, the schedule for conducting the survey was arranged with the teacher-respondents. Before the participants completed the tool, consent forms to participate in the study were distributed and collected to establish a clear relationship between the researchers and the respondents.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the participants' level of efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices. A non-parametric measure, specifically Spearman's correlation, was employed to determine the relationship of the three variables measured. The test is used after a failure in using Pearson's r , which was established via Shapiro-Wilk test of normality. To compare the responses of Filipino and Thai in-service teachers, another non-parametric test via Mann-Whitney U test was employed. The test is utilized after the assumptions of the t-test were not met. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software.

Results

The three-part survey tool was used to determine the level of attitudes, efficacy, and intentions for inclusive practices of the teacher-participants. Similarly, the study also determined the relationship between the three constructs and the teacher-participants' inclusive practices. The results and discussion of the investigation are summarized in the following tables and paragraphs.

Level of attitudes, efficacy, and intentions for inclusive practices of Filipino and Thai in-service teachers

Level of efficacy for inclusive practices

Results of the survey revealed that the levels of efficacy for inclusive practices of Filipino and Thai teachers are high and moderately high (See Table 4). A mean score of 4.95 was yielded from the Filipino participants; conversely, a mean score of 4.295 was yielded from their Thai counterparts. Further, the statement "I can make expectations clear about my students' behavior" obtained the lowest mean score (4.120).

Level of attitudes for inclusive practices

Results showed that Filipino participants have a positive attitude for inclusive practices, as shown in their high mean score of 5.779 or "very likely" in all the ten statements (See Table 4). For the Thai participants, results revealed positive attitudes for inclusive practices with mean scores of 4.954 or "somewhat likely." However, their mean score is relatively lower than their Filipino counterparts (See Table 4).

Level of intentions to teach in an inclusive setting

Data gathered indicated that Filipino participants have "very likely" intentions to teach in an inclusive setting, evidenced in their high agreement in all seven statements with the mean score of 5.941. As for the Thai participants, results presented "somewhat likely" intentions to teach in an inclusive setting based on their agreement on all statements under this construct with a mean score of 4.463. Their mean score is relatively lower than the mean score of their Filipino counterparts (See Table 4).

Table 4. Participants' level of efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices

| | Philippines | | Interpretation | Thailand | | Interpretation | p-value |
|---|-------------|------|----------------|----------|------|----------------------------------|---------|
| | Mean | SD | | Mean | SD | | |
| Efficacy of inclusive practices | 4.95 | 0.71 | Agree (High) | 4.29 | 0.95 | Somewhat Agree (Moderately High) | 0.0001 |
| Attitudes for inclusive practices | 5.78 | 0.74 | Very Likely | 4.95 | 1.19 | Somewhat likely | 0.0001 |
| Intentions to teach in an inclusive setting | 5.94 | 0.68 | Very Likely | 4.46 | 1.02 | Somewhat likely | 0.0001 |

Relationship of the Filipino in-service teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices

For Filipino participants, results yielded from the survey showed a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of .590. The results construed a statistically significant and positive correlation between the participants' efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices (See Table 5).

Table 5. Test of the relationship of Filipino in-service teachers' efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices

| Variable | Spearman's r | 95% CI | p value | Conclusion |
|--|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Test of relationship of participants' efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices | .590 | .52 to .65 | .0001 | Significant |

Level of significance is at 5%

Similarly, in the test of the association of the participants' efficacy and intentions for inclusive practices, a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of .512 suggests that the correlation of the two constructs is also significant and positive (See Table 6).

Table 6. Test of the relationship of Filipino in-service teachers' efficacy and intentions for inclusive practices

| Variable | Spearman's r | 95% CI | p value | Conclusion |
|---|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Test of relationship of participants' efficacy and intentions for inclusive practices | .512 | .43 to .59 | .0001 | Significant |

Level of significance is at 5%

Further, a statistically significant and positive association was established in the test of the correlation of the respondents' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices with a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of .605 (See Table 7).

Table 7. Test of the relationship of Filipino in-service teachers' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices

| Variable | Spearman's r | 95% CI | p value | Conclusion |
|--|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Test of relationship of participants' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices | .605 | .53 to .67 | .0001 | Significant |

Level of significance is at 5%

The conclusions were derived since the resulting p-values of the tests measured did not exceed the significant level of 5%. Together, the test revealed that there is a significant positive correlation of the Filipino in-service teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices.

Relationship of Thai in-service teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices

For the Thai respondents, the results of the survey yielded a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of .885, suggesting a statistically significant and positive correlation between the participants' efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices (See Table 8).

Table 8. Test of the relationship of Thai in-service teachers' efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices

| Variable | Spearman's r | 95% CI | p value | Conclusion |
|--|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Test of relationship of participants' efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices | .885 | .84 to .92 | .0001 | Significant |

Level of significance is at 5%

Similarly, a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of .715 was obtained on the test of the association of the participants' efficacy and intentions for inclusive practices suggesting a strong and positive correlation of the two constructs (See Table 9).

Table 9. Test of the relationship of Thai in-service teachers' efficacy and intentions for inclusive practices

| Variable | Spearman's r | 95% CI | p value | Conclusion |
|---|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Test of relationship of participants' efficacy and intentions for inclusive practices | .715 | .62 to .79 | .0001 | Significant |

Level of significance is at 5%

Further, a statistically significant and positive association was established in the test of the correlation of the participants' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices with a Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of .745 (See Table 10).

Table 10. Test of the relationship of Thai in-service teachers' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices

| Variable | Spearman's r | 95% CI | p value | Conclusion |
|--|--------------|------------|---------|-------------|
| Test of relationship of participants' attitudes and intentions for inclusive practices | .745 | .66 to .81 | .0001 | Significant |

Level of significance is at 5%

The conclusions were derived since the resulting p-values of the tests measured did not exceed the significant level of 5%. Taken together, the results suggest that there is positive association of the Thai in-service teachers' efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices.

Discussion

The current study analyzed the level of efficacy and attitudes for inclusive practices and intentions to teach in the inclusive settings of Filipino and Thai in-service teachers. It also sought to establish the relationship between the three constructs pertaining to the respondents' inclusive practices. The Filipino participants have higher mean scores in terms of the three constructs as compared to their Thai counterparts. While both contexts are developing Asian-countries, the results are varied. Hence, the study implies several insights.

On a macro level, the inclusive agenda is implemented differently by each government (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Forlin, 2012). While varied results from the two countries emerged, it is interesting to note that available literature suggests that inclusion is still taking its momentum in both countries under study (Muega, 2016; Vibulpatanavong, 2018) and that teachers are still struggling to carry on the inclusive agenda (Del-Corro - Tiangco & Bustos, 2014; Muega, 2016; Shippen et al., 2005; Vibulpatanavong, 2018; Vorapanya, 2008). Moreover, in both Southeast Asian countries, inclusion remains a challenge significantly because of the unsynchronised view of inclusion. There are population that promotes inclusion while the remaining part, people are still confused about how to implement it (Cipkin & Rizza, 2011). Hence, it is not enough to say that the Philippines has a better implementation of the inclusive agenda, basing only on the results of the respondents' mean scores. Studies describe the challenges of developing countries in the implementation of the inclusive agenda. On the contrary, the result demonstrates a future basing on the association between the participants' mean scores and their countries readiness and agency to fully implement the ideals of the inclusive agenda.

Further, the results of this study are contrary to the findings of Hecht et al. (2017), where the participants obtained a score above the theoretical means in the constructs measured. Their findings demonstrated a strong link to Italy's almost 100% implementation of inclusion and Australian teachers' normative beliefs compared to their Italian counterparts.

On a micro level, the high mean score of Filipino participants in all three constructs can be attributed to several factors. First, teachers in the general education setting are left with no choice but to accommodate and address the diversity of learners in increasing class size (Muega, 2016). This claim could mean two things. Teachers continue to struggle and they can challenge themselves, go beyond their limit, and can produce coping strategies. Second, Del-Corro - Tiangco (2014) claimed that Filipino teachers have high regard for their profession manifested in their willingness to provide a productive learning environment for maximum learning of their diverse class. Lastly, being a signatory of the Salamanca statement, the country has put into policy few legislations to promote inclusion, and very recently enacted an active call towards inclusion through the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013" which unequivocally requires all Filipino teachers to provide inclusion to the learners (Department of Education, 2013). A series of workshops and professional development activities are being done in various school divisions to support the teachers in this transition.

For the Thai participants, their mean scores in all three constructs can be attributed to several factors, too. Many policies have been implemented to achieve the country's inclusive goals (Hauwadhanasuk et al., 2018). As early as

1999, the Thai government already pushed for equality for all learners, allowing them for the same educational opportunity (Hauwadhanasuk et al., 2018; Taweechaisupapong, 2015). Another example is its implementation of Standard of Quality Assurance for Inclusive Education within Academics, which emphasizes teacher training, like any other state, towards successful inclusion. As cited in Taweechaisupapong (2015), a durable inclusion in the Thai context is still unattainable because of many obstacles; one of those is teacher training (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2012, 2014; Sukbunpant et al., 2013; Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). However, to continually overcome this hurdle, the Thai government has required pre-service teachers to take several units on teaching diverse pupils to prepare them in their teaching posts (Taweechaisupapong, 2015).

As to the correlation of the three constructs, both Filipino and Thai participants exhibited a positive correlation of their efficacy, attitudes, and intentions for inclusive practices. The result agreed with the findings of studies conducted among Turkish, Australian, Italian, Armenian teachers (Alaverdyan, 2018; Hecht et al., 2017; Ozokcu, 2018; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016). However, the result contradicts the study of Dapudong (2014) where he reported that Thai teachers have a neutral attitude towards inclusive education; however, measuring with a different survey tool in quantifying the variable studied. Muega (2016), on the other hand, reported seemingly low efficacy of Filipino teachers regarding inclusive practices, but this is via a qualitative method.

Almost three decades after the Salamanca Statement, available literature claims that several countries are still struggling with the implementation of inclusion (Forlin, 2012). The claim can be due to the debated nature of inclusion and manifold interpretation of and multi-layered difficulties in the implementation of the inclusive agenda (Florian, 2012); this does not exempt the Philippines and Thailand. While both of the countries under study seemingly spread the inclusive agenda too thinly at the moment, the high mean scores of the respondents and the registered correlation of the three constructs are a significant contribution to achieving high-quality inclusion. The results explicitly show that while the Filipino and Thai teachers may still lack the competencies to make inclusion a normative part of the curriculum, they are geared towards reaching this collective goal.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The core of education is to facilitate citizenries' economic and social stability by developing and enhancing competencies of its human capital. This broad goal is achieved through educational quality, access, and equity. It is in this same goal that the inclusive agenda is anchored (Forlin, 2012). Also, in the pursuit of improving human communities, teachers serve as leverage and crucial persons in the educational systems. Be it in first world countries like Italy and Australia, or developing countries like Thailand and the Philippines, exploring the teachers' understanding of their crucial role in the high-quality and just implementation of the inclusive agenda is significant.

In the parlance of the inclusive agenda, the question is not on whether it works or not, but preferably in leaps and actions on how to make it work (Thomas et al., 1998). Putting teachers in the frontline of the inclusive agenda is among the key ways that will make inclusion work. Each country's government should support its teachers in acquiring the necessary competencies to meaningfully and excellently fulfill their tasks in their policies and structures, being a signatory of EFA and Salamanca Statement.

Inclusive policies create the plans, but a human capital of well-prepared and well-trained teachers possessing high efficacy, positive attitudes, and good intentions toward inclusive practices warrants a successful inclusion (Forlin, 2012; Sharma et al., 2017; Sharma & Jacobs, 2016). Teachers should be able to fully integrate inclusivity in the teaching and learning process to overcome barriers to learning and promote success (Awang-Hashim et al., 2019). In rapidly changing times and increasing diversity in the population, preparing teachers for useful inclusion is necessary.

Limitations of the Study

This study is not without any caveats. There is a need to be cautious in interpreting the results of the current study due to the following reasons: (a) there is no elucidation of the analysis and discussion of the sub-dimensions of the TEIP tool; (b) data were not gathered from teachers from an extended geographical location for broader generalizability of the results, and (c) the results were only analyzed and interpreted in the light of the constructs and variables covered in the survey instruments.

Recommendations for future research

This study forwards the following recommendations: (a) analyze the three constructs and establish the link on how different countries prepare and train their teachers to fulfill their multi-layered and highly complex roles, especially in the inclusive agenda, e.g., curriculum, structured learning experiences, and programs, and (b) interview to gather an in-depth understanding of the efficacy, attitudes, and intentions of in-service teachers regarding inclusive practices by determining the sources and location of their disposition and competencies concerning the inclusive agenda.

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