

# **A Comparison of Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusive Education for Students with Special Needs in Elementary Schools in Luang Prabang, Lao P.D.R**

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## **Abstract**

The purposes of this study were to explore teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs in elementary schools and to compare teachers' perceptions of inclusive education based on their personal characteristics.

103 participant teachers who teach in elementary schools in Luang Prabang district, Luang Prabang province, Lao P.D.R involved in this study. Questionnaire was used to measure teachers' characteristics and perceptions in this study. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part is teachers' personal characteristics including gender, age, educational qualification, professional qualification and teaching experience. The second part is to measure the teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for teaching students with special needs including classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assistive technologies, and partnership.

The findings of this study showed that the level of teachers' perceptions towards inclusive education for teaching students with special needs was high in overall. The result also showed the highest to the least of teachers' perceptions partnership, classroom environment, instruction, assistive technologies and curriculum respectively. In addition, the comparison of teachers' perception based on their personal characteristics, there was a statistically significant difference at .05 level in age and teaching experience. The research suggested that professional development for teaching students with special needs and adapting curriculum are needed to improve quality inclusive education in Luang Prabang, Lao P.D.R.

**Keywords:** inclusive education, students with special needs, teacher, perception, elementary.

## **I. Introduction**

This study was focused on teachers' perceptions who had experiences of teaching students with special needs in elementary schools. However, this group of teachers had not completed teachers' training in any field of inclusive education or special education for students with special needs or students with disabilities. Additionally, during researcher was working at the Luang Prabang Teacher Training College, researcher had chance to observe the teacher training students' practice of teaching at schools. Researcher had noted that host school teachers feel not confident when there were students with special needs in classroom. They do not know how to teach or support students with disabilities or students with special needs. Even Lao government had policy to support students with disabilities in education plan of action for students with disabilities (2016-2020) which followed the agreement to sign on access and quality of special needs education in World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca conference, thus became the pivotal platform that reauthorized the concept of inclusive education as significant goal in educational field.

For those reasons are that the most important educating concern is to provide the necessary supporting to regular schools with inclusive orientation based on learners' profile so that they can achieve efficiency in the entire education system (UN, 1994). Therefore, inclusive programs was accept and welcome all students with different backgrounds and abilities such as students with disabilities, social status differences, gender, different cultures, religions, languages, or other conditions for education system (UNESCO, 2009). These conception are contained in the national constitution regarding education, education law and education action plans in Lao PDR (MoES, 2015). Additionally, these principles and guidelines continue to contain toward education action plans in 2016-2020. It also contains in the plan of action on education for learners with disabilities 2016-2020 (MoES, 2015). This plan aims to support students with special needs to learn in least restrictive environment, with the provision of appropriate curriculum, instrument technologies, professional teachers and caretakers. Moreover, inclusive education is the education system that offers the opportunities for every learner to access general school. It is also an educational process designed to appropriately meet the specials learners' needs through universal instruction (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 2014). For the teacher's perception of inclusive education in Lao PDR, there was a study in 2012 that focused on teachers' perception at the southern of Laos in Attapeu province toward inclusion of students with special education needs in regular schools (Khamsovannong, 2012). Finding of the most participant were preferred that students with disabilities should be included in special schools. This study was suggested that inclusion into regular elementary schools can benefit the families of students with disabilities; Lao regular teachers, Lao community, and students without disabilities.

With regarding to the above important situation findings, this research study aims to explore teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs in elementary schools which include classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assistive technologies and partnership. Another study objective aims to compare with the teachers' perceptions of inclusive education based on their personal characteristics, including gender, age, educational qualification, professional qualification and teaching experience. Furthermore, the research findings may contribute to add more information of teaching students with special needs for teacher training program in preparing syllabus for curriculum to train teachers in this field in the future.

This study was based on the philosophical and theoretical framework of the Bourdieu's concept of habitus, capital and fields (Bourdieu, 1992, 1998). Bourdieu explained his concept by closely observing people's behavior and the ways they approach practice in society. Bourdieu's theory relates to social structure which has an effect on decision making of people in society. In every society, people use their statuses to express their dispositions. Generally, people are valued by power (Batesa & Davisb, 2004). To extent Bourdieu mentioned in this study passage of the concept of teachers' perceptions, fields is the partnership of teachers who are cooperated with parents of students, administrators, paraprofessional and others part of cooperation in elementary schools. The partnership fields that are the under the rules, culture, condition, curriculum and students achievements that teachers have to pay attention with. Habitus have been represented the teachers' perception of students with special education. Teachers expressed their attitude, belief, and experience in supporting students with special needs by appropriate classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assistive technology and others categories of partnership in positive ways. Capital was repeated by the teachers' education qualification throughout teachers' perception to students. When teachers teach student in the class that have more difference appearance, teachers who have different capital or perception might express throughout students in different ways. According to the concept of theories and related studies from the literature review, researcher created the conceptual framework in this research study as bellows figure:

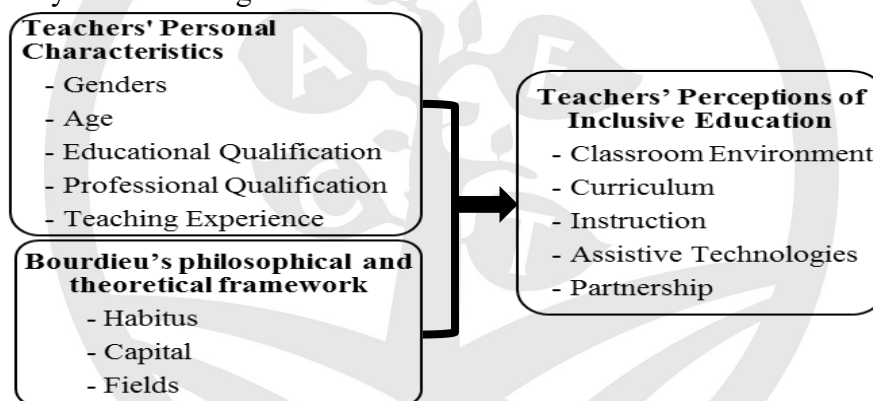


Figure 1, The conceptual framework

## II. Research methods

### 2.1 Research participants

The participants in this research was 103 teachers who teach in 8 elementary schools and a special education school in Luang Prabang district, Luang Prabang province, Lao P.D.R as showing in table 1:

Table 1. Teachers' participants from 9 schools

No	Name of Schools	Participants
1	Luang Prabang Primary school	13
2	Aphay Primary School	13
3	Phoumork Primary School	8
4	Moung Ngar Primary school	8
5	Naluang Primary School	9
6	Sangkhalork Primary School	9
7	Sithan Primary School	22
8	Sathid Primary school	9
9	Luang Prabang Special Education School	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>103</b>

## 2.2 Research instruments

This study is the survey research that use questionnaire for collecting data. This was investigated employing on teachers' personal factors affecting the teachers' perception of inclusive education for students with special education needs. The questionnaire had two parts. First part asked the teachers' demographic information and second part asked about level of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs in 60 aspects of positive and negative questions. Each aspect was used the Likert scale to measure the teachers' perception in five scales. Afterward, the score of the answers were classified by 4 levels according to the Best's criteria (1977).

## 2.3 Quality of research instrument

To measure the content and reliability quality of each aspect question, researcher submitted instruments to 3 specialist experts in student special education to examine for completing and correcting with over 0.50 of totally calculation by Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). Furthermore, researcher had try-out the instrument with 20 teachers from elementary schools in Luang Prabang Province, Lao P.D.R. 60 aspects in questionnaire kept on the rule of Cronbach's alpha in result try-out were 0.89 which accepted in this study.

## 2.4 Data analysis

The collecting data of questionnaires were described by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) such as frequency, percentage, mean to show the level of teachers' perceptions. Additionally, the teachers' perception on different aspects were measured by standard deviation as t-test and one-way ANOVA. The significant differences in comparing between teachers' personal factors and teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs based on their personal characteristics were shown by post hoc test with LSD (Least Significant Deviation).

## III. Results

### 3.1 The level of teachers' perceptions

The overall level of teachers' perception measured and analyzed with the descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviation as showing below in table 2.

**Table 2. The overall level of teachers' perception (n=103)**

Inclusive Education	Mean	S.D	Level
Classroom environment	3.57	0.36	High
Curriculum	3.44	0.29	High
Instruction	3.57	0.32	High
Assistive technologies	3.48	0.38	High
Partnership	3.9	0.42	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>High</b>

This table show the high level of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs at 3.59 in overall. When consider to the perception of teachers in each aspect of inclusive education for students with special needs, it was the highest mean value of 3.90 for the aspect partnership, followed by the mean value of 3.57 for the aspect; classroom environment and instruction.

### 3.2 The comparison of teachers' perceptions based on their personal characteristics

The detail of comparison summary of teachers' perception of inclusive education based on their personal characteristics are shown in table 3.

**Table 3. The overall comparison of teachers' perception**

Hypothesis of Comparison	Results
1 Teachers with different gender had different perception on inclusive education for students with special needs.	Not difference
2 Teachers in different age group had different perception on inclusive education for students with special needs.	Difference
3 Teachers with different education qualification had different perception on inclusive education for students with special needs.	Not difference
4 Teachers with different professional qualification had different perception on inclusive education for students with special needs.	Not difference
5 Teachers with different teaching experiences had different perception on inclusive education for students with special needs.	Difference

According to table 3, it was found that there was the statistically significant difference in the different age group of teachers' perception towards assistive technologies of inclusive education for students with special needs. Additionally, there was the statistically significant difference of teachers' perception towards assistive technologies and partnership of inclusive education for students with special needs based on their teaching experience. These detail findings of the distribution of variables shown as follow.

**Table 4. Comparison of Teachers' Perceptions based on age (n=103)**

Age		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Classroom Environment	Between Groups	0.503	3	0.168	1.272	0.288
	Within Groups	13.063	99	0.132		
	Total	13.566	102			
Curriculum	Between Groups	0.653	3	0.218	2.673	0.052
	Within Groups	8.062	99	0.081		
	Total	8.715	102			
Instruction	Between Groups	0.193	3	0.064	0.607	0.612
	Within Groups	10.507	99	0.106		
	Total	10.7	102			
Assistive Technologies	Between Groups	1.521	3	0.507	3.784*	0.013
	Within Groups	13.266	99	0.134		
	Total	14.787	102			
Partnership	Between Groups	0.977	3	0.326	1.93	0.13
	Within Groups	16.706	99	0.169		
	Total	17.683	102			
Total	Between Groups	0.368	3	0.123	1.845	0.144
	Within Groups	6.589	99	0.067		
	Total	6.958	102			

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to the comparison in the table 4, it was indicated that the teachers' perception of inclusive education for students with special needs based on age was not statistically significant difference. However, when consider to the teachers' perception

towards assistive technologies of inclusive education, there was a statistically significant difference perception of their group of age differences. Therefore, the comparison of different are shown by Post Hoc LSD comparison as below.

**Table 5. The different age group of teachers' perception towards assistive technologies (n=103)**

Age	20-30 years 31-40 years 41-50 years >50years				
	Mean	3.3	3.6	3.48	3.61
20-30 years	3.3	-	-.30*	-.18	-.31*
31-40 years	3.6	-	-	.12	-.01
41-50 years	3.48	-	-	-	-.13
>50 years	3.61	-	-	-	-

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

From table 5, it was found that teachers in the age group of 20 years to 30 years had the statistically significant different perception with teachers in the age group of 31 years to 40 years and >50years.

**Table 6. Comparison based on teaching experience (n=103)**

Inclusive Education		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Classroom Environment	Between Groups	.398	3	.133	.997	.397
	Within Groups	13.168	99	.133		
	Total	13.566	102			
Curriculum	Between Groups	.047	3	.016	.179	.910
	Within Groups	8.668	99	.088		
	Total	8.715	102			
Instruction	Between Groups	.341	3	.114	1.086	.359
	Within Groups	10.359	99	.105		
	Total	10.700	102			
Assistive Technologies	Between Groups	1.180	3	.393	2.863*	.041
	Within Groups	13.606	99	.137		
	Total	14.787	102			
Partnership	Between Groups	1.870	3	.623	3.903*	.011
	Within Groups	15.813	99	.160		
	Total	17.683	102			
Total	Between Groups	.393	3	.131	1.978	.122
	Within Groups	6.564	99	.066		
	Total	6.958	102			

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to table 6, it was stated that there was not a statistically significant difference in teachers' perception of inclusive education for students with special needs based on teaching experience in overall findings. However, when we look through the teachers' perception towards assistive technologies and partnership, they were statistically significant difference in their perception of their teaching experience differences. Therefore, the comparison of different are shown by Post Hoc LSD comparison as below.

**Table 7. The different teaching experience of teachers' perception towards assistive technologies (n=103)**

Teaching Experience	Mean	≥ 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	> 15 years
≥ 5 years	3.40	-	.13	-.23	-.13
6-10 years	3.27	-	-	-.36*	-.26*
11-15 years	3.63	-	-	-	.10
> 15 years	3.53	-	-	-	-

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

The table 7 was indicated that teachers who had the experience of 6 years to 10 years of teaching had the statistically significant different perception with teachers who had the experience 11 years to 15 years of teaching and the experience more than 15 years of teaching.

**Table 8. The different teaching experience of teachers' perception towards partnership (n=103)**

Teaching Experience	Mean	≥ 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	> 15 years
≥ 5 years	3.87	-	.28*	-.12	-.11
6-10 years	3.59	-	-	-.40*	-.39*
11-15 years	3.99	-	-	-	.01
> 15 years	3.98	-	-	-	-

\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to the comparison test showing the different teaching experience of teachers' perception toward partnership above in table 8, it was found that teachers who had the experience less than 5 years or 5 years of teaching had the statistically significant different perception with teachers who had the experience 6 years to 10 years of teaching. In addition, teachers who had the experience 6 years to 10 years of teaching had the statistically significant different perception with teachers who had the experience 11 years to 15 years of teaching and the experience more than 15 years of teaching.

## IV. Discussion

This proceeding paper is presented of data collected of 103 teachers from 8 elementary schools and a special education school on perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs. The result study indicated that teachers' perceptions was high in overall level. Additionally, teachers in different age groups and teaching experiences had different perceptions towards assistive technologies and partnership of inclusive education for students with special needs. These finding details are deeply discussed by following sections below:

### 4.1 The high level of teachers' perceptions

According to the data analysis in this study, it was found that the overall level of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs was high. It was illustrated that the overall of inclusive education for students with special needs in Luang Prabang district, Luang Prabang province, Lao P.D.R was accepted. This acceptance shown that teachers understand and know the targets of national policy on inclusive education (decree 509/PM & 1170/MOE, 29 November 2010). Teachers perceived to encourage learners, families and communities to be effective in learning for the highest partnership level of 3.90 in comparing to others aspects in this research study. The following aspects of inclusive education was that teacher perceived the classroom environment and instruction for students with special needs the most at 3.57. These results are supported the third objective of the National Strategy and Plan

of Action on Inclusive Education 2016-2020 (NSPAIE) which aims to develop human resources and are released undeveloped country in 2020 by reducing inequality of genders, persons with disabilities, poverties people, ethnic groups and others. Moreover, these results of teachers' perception were indicated that teachers have well perceived the targets of national policy on inclusive education.

Therefore, this finding may contribute to the concept of inclusive education that is welcomed all attending students to study at neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. Education for students with special needs is the system to support and enhance students for the needs of their learning skills. This education system needs to contain the adapting classroom environment, curriculum, instruction, assistive technologies and well organizing partnership in school sitting. Those above mentioned similar to Deiner (2010) who said that inclusive education is the concept that support students with special education needs. Inclusive education is responsible for the diversity of learners. Educators need to understand individual differences by enhancing an awareness of their diversity.

To summary with finding of the high level of teachers' perceptions of inclusive education for students with special needs in this study was indicated that teachers might be able to accept the educational right of students with special needs or disabilities in providing the educational qualities. That similar finding to Agbenyega & Klibthong (2014) indicated that children with disabilities were accepted by early childhood inclusion teachers in their educational right and the core principle of inclusion.

#### **4.2 The significantly different teachers' perceptions**

Following the results of above comparison were that the different teachers' age groups had the significantly different perceptions towards assistive technologies of inclusive education for students with special needs. It was presented that every teacher regardless of age has the personal technique in adapt assistive technologies for teaching students with special needs appropriately. That was the accepted hypothesis which was similar line to Mull & Sitlington (2003): statement that special education teachers should have access to technological tools that could help them to support appropriately for all students. That related to Johnston, Beard, & Carpenter (2007, p. 4) coted that "an item or piece of equipment or product system either acquired commercially, off the shelf, modified, or customized and used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capability for individual with disabilities". Therefore, these suggested that teacher in different age groups were played the right role on implementing assistive technologies to support to meet the needs of students.

From the analysis of data, it was found that there were the significant difference on the teachers' perceptions towards assistive technologies and partnership of inclusive education for students with special needs by their period of service differences. It was illustrated that most of teachers perceived the differences; it may due to teachers who were not similar period of experiences to understand the partnership and assistive technologies in the different ways. That similar line to Baron & Byrne (1991) mentioned that perceptions formed as a result of direct personal experience. According to the finding illustrated that teachers in 6 to 10 years of service teaching had more different perceptions toward assistive technologies and partnership of inclusive education with the various period teaching services. This period may be good in understanding to use assistive technologies to meet the needs of students. They also might be able make a good partnership with team teaching, parents, community of school connection. That was consist of Foreman & Arthur-Kelly (2017) found that

Experience comes from different sources such as teaching experience and environmental experience. In the same subject or topic, teachers might not teach in the same procedure or explain in the same situation in the same way. This is because different teachers might not have the same experiences. People with several experiences and who longer time spend with students with disabilities have richer perception than the people with limited experiences. All in all this finding recommended that due to person with working in this period is hunting experience from learning with successful co-workers and challenge with trying new method of working to gain more experiences.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

Based on this investigated study, the suggestions and recommendations are made; professional development for teaching students with special needs and adapting curriculum are needed to improve quality inclusive education in Luang Prabang, Lao P.D.R. It would be good if ministry of education and sports cloud create the program for training teachers for teaching students with special needs.

### **4.4 Acknowledgements**

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