

Project PATAS (Project Advancing Teacher's Attitude toward SPED): Advancing Inclusive Education in Magallanes

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ABSTRACT

Project PATAS (Project Advancing Teacher's Attitude toward Special Education) represents a pioneering effort in the realm of inclusive education (IE) in Magallanes, Cavite, Philippines. The project was developed with the primary goal of enhancing the attitudes of regular teachers toward IE. Focusing on enabling educators to comprehend the essence of IE and equipping them with strategies tailored for Learners with Disabilities (LWD), PATAS set out to bridge the gap between mainstream education and the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. To gauge the effectiveness of PATAS, a comprehensive pre-test was administered to the participants. Following the completion of the PATAS training program, a post-test was conducted. The mean scores obtained from these tests demonstrated a significant improvement, indicating a notable enhancement in the participants' knowledge and understanding. The findings unequivocally revealed that PATAS played a pivotal role in enhancing the participants' learning experiences, enabling them to grasp the intricacies of IE comprehensively. Through this initiative, not only did the participants acquire a deeper understanding of IE, but their attitudes toward IE and their ability to effectively support and educate learners with disabilities were markedly transformed.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Regular Teachers, Learners with Disability, Special Education

Introduction of Best Practices

Project PATAS (Project Advancing Teacher's Attitude toward SPED): Advancing Inclusive Education in Magallanes stands as a pioneering and innovative initiative designed to transform the landscape of secondary inclusive education (IE) in Magallanes, Cavite, Philippines. This ground-breaking project was conceived as a response to the research conducted by Bencito in 2021, which revealed that regular teachers (RTs) generally held positive attitudes toward IE. However, concerning aspects such as administrative support and collaboration with Special Education (SPED) teachers, there were uncertainties observed. Recognizing the urgency of enhancing RTs' understanding and approach toward IE, Project PATAS was conceptualized.

Project PATAS was meticulously crafted with a singular focus: to elevate the attitudes of RTs in Magallanes toward IE. By equipping them with essential knowledge and strategies, PATAS aimed to empower participants to effectively engage with and support LWDs in their classrooms. The training's objectives were crystal clear: to

enable RTs to explain the concept of IE comprehensively and furnish them with responsive strategies tailored for learners with diverse educational needs.

Crucially, Project PATAS distinguishes itself by adopting an innovative approach to training. SPED teachers, recognized experts in the field, were appointed as trainers and facilitators. Their expertise and experience were harnessed to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment, ensuring that the training was not only informative but also deeply impactful.

Project PATAS emerges as a beacon of change, addressing the existing gaps and driving the transformation of attitudes among RTs. This initiative, rooted in evidence-based insights and expert guidance, holds the promise of fostering a more inclusion in Magallanes, thereby nurturing a generation of teachers equipped to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Justification of Best Practices Implementation

Project PATAS, the pioneering initiative aimed at advancing IE in Magallanes, stands as a beacon of transformative change in the educational landscape. This groundbreaking project was not merely an innovative endeavour; it was a response to the urgent need highlighted by Bencito's 2021 study, "Secondary Regular Teachers and IE in the New Normal in Magallanes, Cavite." The research underscored a stark reality: learners with disabilities were disproportionately excluded from mainstream education, being 2.5 times more likely to never attend school, as reported by UNESCO in 2020.

The project's genesis was rooted in the fundamental belief that IE, which embraces every student, regardless of their requirements, is a basic human right. It is alarming, however, that nearly 30% of teachers lacked training in IE, as highlighted in the initial study. Project PATAS emerged as a response to this educational inequity. Its success is not a mere anecdotal narrative; it is substantiated by empirical evidence. The research study following PATAS implementation revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($\bar{x}=7$ vs. $10/10$, $p\text{-value}=4.737e-8$), affirming the project's efficacy.

Furthermore, Project PATAS's success radiates beyond Magallanes. Its impact resonates in the interest displayed by researchers from neighbouring municipalities in Cavite, who have sought to replicate its success in their regions. The project's name, "PATAS," a Tagalog word meaning 'equal of the same level,' succinctly encapsulates its core mission: to provide Learners with Disabilities the same quality education as their mainstream counterparts. This commitment aligns seamlessly with the constitutional mandate of the Republic of the Philippines, emphasizing the right to quality education for all citizens.

As the project moves forward, expanding its reach to elementary schools in Magallanes, its significance becomes even more pronounced. The next implementation phase in the academic year 2024 signifies a commitment to sustained progress. It echoes the words of D'Addio & April (2022), emphasizing the pivotal role of teachers in embracing diverse learners. This endeavour is not just a project; it is a

Movement-an advocacy to establish inclusive schools and facilities in Magallanes, Cavite, Philippines.

In essence, Project PATAS epitomizes the power of proactive intervention, evidence-based practices, and collaborative efforts. It symbolizes a collective stride towards a more inclusive, equitable, and just educational system, where every learner, regardless of their abilities, can flourish. By championing IE, Project PATAS doesn't just change classrooms; it transforms lives, fostering a future where every child can thrive, learn, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Objectives of Implementation

The objectives of best practice implementation are:

1. To improve the attitude of regular teachers toward inclusive education
2. Participants can explain what inclusive education and use strategies responsive to learners with disabilities.

Best Practices Implemented

Project PATAS, a ground-breaking initiative dedicated to advancing Inclusive Education (IE) in Magallanes, Cavite, Philippines signifies a transformative shift in the educational paradigm. It emerged as a response to the urgent concerns highlighted in Bencito's 2021 where the alarming reality of learners with disabilities being disproportionately excluded from mainstream education was underscored.

Rooted in the fundamental belief that IE is a basic human right, Project PATAS aimed to address the educational inequity laid bare in the initial study. The project's success is not anecdotal but grounded in empirical evidence. Post-PATAS implementation, the research study demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' scores ($\bar{x}=7$ to 10/10, $p\text{-value}=4.737e-8$), confirming the project's effectiveness.

Beyond Magallanes, Project PATAS's impact resonates in neighbouring Cavite municipalities, where researchers express keen interest in replicating its success. The project's name, "PATAS," a Tagalog term denoting 'equality,' encapsulates its core mission: to offer Learners with Disabilities the same quality education as their mainstream peers. This commitment aligns seamlessly with the constitutional mandate of the Republic of the Philippines, ensuring quality education as a right for all citizens.

In essence, Project PATAS exemplifies proactive intervention, evidence-based practices, and collaborative efforts. It signifies a collective stride toward an inclusive, equitable, and just educational system, ensuring that every learner, regardless of their abilities, can thrive. By championing IE, Project PATAS not only transforms classrooms but also nurtures a future where every child can flourish, learn, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Impact of Best Practices Implemented

In the landscape of secondary public schools in Magallanes, a significant challenge loomed: uncertain attitudes among regular teachers toward Inclusive Education (IE). The lack of training in IE posed a formidable obstacle, hindering effective implementation in classrooms. Recognizing this pressing issue, Project PATAS (Project Advancing Teacher's Attitude toward SPED): Advancing Inclusive Education in Magallanes was conceived, heralding a new era of educational inclusivity.

Conducted on February 17, 2022, Project PATAS emerged as a beacon of transformation. It brought together 42 dedicated regular teachers, providing them with a platform to enhance their understanding and attitude towards IE. The results were resounding: a remarkable improvement in attitudes was observed, as evidenced by the enhanced pretest-post-test scores. Prior to the training, the pretest scores exhibited an average of 7.2/10, with a median of 7/10 and a range of 3-10 points. Post PATAS, the participants' scores surged significantly. The post-test results revealed an impressive average of 9.56/10, with a median of 10/10 and a range of 4-10, indicating a profound positive shift in attitudes and knowledge.

The impact of Project PATAS was not confined within the walls of Magallanes' classrooms. A total of 54 regular teachers from public secondary schools in Magallanes, Cavite, directly benefited from this initiative. However, the true beneficiaries of this transformative initiative are the learners with disability. By fostering an environment of understanding, acceptance, and capability, Project PATAS ensured that these learners would receive not just education, but a fair, equal, and high-quality education. This empowerment is pivotal, as it equips them with the tools to overcome challenges, realize their potentials, and contribute meaningfully to society.

In summary, Project PATAS stands as a testament to the power of targeted training and IE initiatives. It not only changed the attitudes of teachers but also paved the way for a more inclusive, empathetic, and supportive educational environment. Through this project, teachers have been empowered, inspired, and most importantly, learners with disabilities have been granted the opportunity to flourish and thrive, setting the stage for a brighter, more inclusive future.

Summary and recommendations

In summary, Project PATAS is a testament to the transformative impact of targeted training and inclusive education (IE) efforts. It not only shifted teachers' attitudes but also created a more inclusive, empathetic, and supportive educational atmosphere. In conclusion, before Project PATAS, regular teachers had an average pre-test score of 7. After the project, their post-test scores significantly improved to an average of 10. The substantial difference between pre-test and post-test scores, with a p-value of 4.737e-8, underscores the project's effectiveness in enhancing teachers' knowledge and understanding.

Furthermore, this project recommends increased collaboration with SPED teachers to facilitate more IE activities. Each school is urged to develop a localized project inspired by Project PATAS, transforming their institutions into inclusive schools. Additionally, the proposal suggests implementing an Inclusive Education Building Capacity Plan which emphasizes holistic education for learners with disabilities.

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