

Inclusive Education Organization Skills of Preschool Teachers: An Exploratory Study in The Northern Mountainous Regions of Vietnam

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Abstract

Currently, the proportion of children with disabilities participating in preschool educational activities is increasing in Vietnam. This poses significant challenges for teachers in inclusive preschools, as they often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively teach classes that include both children with disabilities and those without. Although teachers in inclusive classes at schools with children with disabilities receive some training to enhance their abilities before the new school year, the training duration is brief, and their understanding of children with disabilities and specific educational methods for this group remains limited. This research explores the skills of preschool teachers in organizing inclusive education in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, aiming to identify measures to help them improve the effectiveness of educational activities for all children in inclusive classes.

Keywords: Skills, Organization, Inclusive Education, Preschool Teachers, Children with Disabilities, The Northern Mountainous Region Of Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Integration is increasingly recognized and widely used in many different countries. Inclusive education is a developmental approach aimed at meeting the diverse learning needs of all children, addressing diversity in academic ability, ethnicity, culture, physical, and mental capabilities. Inclusive education originated from Canada and is understood as 'exceptional children being integrated, included in regular schools. Integration is the most common term referring to the "least restrictive educational environment" Naser, Z. et al. (2020). In an inclusive education environment, the learning outcomes of children with disabilities can be improved when they receive adjusted programs and teaching methods tailored to their needs (Black-Hawkins, K. et al. (2007).

The concept of "inclusion" is understood differently by various scholars worldwide, leading to a range of definitions that highlight its complexity (Lindsay, 2003, 2007; P. Mitchell, 2014). This diversity of definitions often sparks debates among researchers and practitioners (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002). Inclusion transcends mere access to education; it encompasses multiple dimensions.

Inclusion is described as the process of eliminating exclusion and marginalization, strengthening the capacities of the education system (UNESCO, 2009), transforming schools, and focusing on equal access to education for all children. It is seen as a fundamental right for both children and adults to fully participate in all aspects of life and culture as well as a vital means of delivering quality education to everyone (Braunsteiner & Mariano-Lapidus, 2014). Additionally, it is viewed as an educational approach that fosters the learning of all students equally within the same environment (Salvia et al., 2017). The inclusive education model based on a positive perspective evaluates children with disabilities accurately and views them like any other children. According to this perspective, all children with disabilities have certain abilities (Sang, L. (2023). Inclusive education is considered a system of values aimed at ensuring the rights of all children to equal access to learning, opportunities to access and achieve success in all areas of education at school (Ballard, 2012)

There are numerous research works on inclusive education and the organization of inclusive education for children with disabilities, such as: the collaboration of families in education and the development of children with disabilities by Raver, S.A (2009), Karren, K. (2010); The design of inclusive classroom learning

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environments by Friend M., Bursuck, W. (1996)... In Vietnam, there are also studies on inclusive education and the organization of inclusive education for children with disabilities, such as: Author Hang, L.T.T (2016) discusses solutions for developing inclusive education competencies in teacher training programs; Authors Anh, N.T.K & Thao, Đ.T (2022) have outlined the process of applying the STEAM model according to the 5E model in the education of children with special needs in inclusive preschools.

In the Vietnam Law on Persons with Disabilities (2010), inclusive education is mentioned when discussing methods of educating students with disabilities: “Inclusive education is a method of educating both disabled and non-disabled persons in educational institutions”. It can be seen that “inclusion” not only benefits children with disabilities but also those without disabilities. Inclusion opens up learning opportunities for both groups of children: typically developing children and children with disabilities. Inclusive education promotes tolerance and allows for social cohesion as it fosters a culture of social inclusion and encourages equal participation in society.

Vietnam has implemented inclusive education policies since 2002, but educational services for people with disabilities are relatively limited, especially in early detection and early intervention services. Challenges hindering the effective provision of educational services for children with disabilities include: a lack of personnel, training opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of teaching equipment. According to the annual evaluation results of the preschool education program issued by the Ministry of Education and Training under Circular No. 17/2009 - MOET, the overall quality of preschool education nationwide has shown positive changes, but alongside these successes, inclusive education for preschool-aged children in educational institutions still faces many limitations, especially in remote mountainous areas. Building and organizing collaborative activities between preschools and special education centers for children with special needs, particularly in mountainous and ethnic minority areas, still face many shortcomings, with many places lacking attention to implementation.

Teachers play a crucial role in effectively implementing inclusive education in preschools. In reality, in Vietnam, most teachers teaching in inclusive preschool classrooms with children with disabilities have a specialized background in Early Childhood Education. They possess good skills in educating typically developing children, but they often face limitations in basic skills required for effectively organizing inclusive education in the classroom due to various reasons, especially teachers in rural or remote mountainous areas in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

The study shows how to build a tool to evaluate the skills of organizing inclusive education of preschool teachers in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam. Determining preschool teachers' skills in organizing inclusive education is very important, which affects the process of implementing educational activities for children in the classroom. If teachers have good skills, the opportunity for children with disabilities to integrate will be higher and children without disabilities will also develop basic skills related to emotional and social skills sooner. From research on the skills of organizing inclusive education of preschool teachers in the northern mountainous region of Vietnam, the study proposes measures to foster skills of organizing inclusive education for preschool teachers in order to improve the quality of inclusive education in preschools in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

METHODS

This study was employed based on a theoretical framework on implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities in preschool-aged, reinforced by practical research in preschools. Alongside the theoretical exposition, surveys were also conducted in the study to assess the current situation using an observation sheet, which consists of 6 skill groups and 40 items. Utilizing the convenience sampling method, the observation sheet was administered to 300 teachers in preschools in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam. These teachers were actively engaged in instructing classes with a significant number of children with disabilities in preschool.

The study was implemented in 5 provinces: Bắc Kạn, Cao Bằng, Điện Biên, Yên Bái, and Thái Nguyên which is in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam. Students belonged to 3-5 age groups. This evaluation was founded upon observations of their engagements and surveys throughout education activities conducted within

preschool settings. Additionally, in this research, ethical considerations were seriously considered. Before approaching the students to collect data, their teachers were asked for permission.

To assess the current situation of inclusive education organization skills of preschool teachers in preschools, descriptive analysis with SPSS version 26.0 was employed. Moreover, the research used a 4-level rating scale to evaluate the implementation level and effectiveness. The scale included the following levels: very low (1 point) - The teacher never performs the skill.; medium (2 points) - The teacher can occasionally perform the skill; good (3 points) - The teacher can perform the skill; very good (4 points) - The teacher regularly and proactively performs the skills (the skills are performed skillfully).

RESULTS

SURVEY TOOLS

-Assessment form for organizing inclusive education skills of preschool teachers in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam.

Step 1: Build an Evaluation Form

CONSTRUCTION FACILITIES:

The items of the assessment form for the organizational skills of inclusive education among preschool teachers in the Northern mountainous region are constructed based on Circular No. 03/2018/TT-MOET regulating Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities; Preschool education curriculum; Inclusive education implementation procedures; and theoretical foundations upon which the research was built.

CONTENT:

Assessing the skills of organizing inclusive education of preschool teachers in the Northern mountainous region with 06 Skill group: Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities; Build individual education plans; Create an individual education plan; Organize educational plans and organize inclusive education activities; Evaluate results and adjust the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms; Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education. Each skill group includes corresponding sub-skills, specifically:

Table 1: Description of assessment form for organizing inclusive education skills of preschool teachers in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam

| No. | Skills Group | Number of items (Corresponding skills) |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities | 10 |
| 2 | Build individual education plans | 4 |
| 3 | Create an individual education plan | 7 |
| 4 | Organize individual education plans and organize inclusive education activities | 5 |
| 5 | Evaluate results and adjust the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms | 4 |
| 6 | Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education | 10 |

| | |
|--------------|-----------|
| Total | 40 |
|--------------|-----------|

Each skill is evaluated with 04 levels of skill performance with corresponding scores 1, 2, 3, 4. Specifically:

1 point: The teacher never performs this skill.

2 points: The teacher can occasionally perform the skill (the teacher does perform the skill, but during the implementation process, he often needs help because he is not doing it correctly).

3 points: The teacher can perform the skill (although sometimes it is not really appropriate).

4 points: The teacher regularly and proactively performs the skills (the skills are performed skillfully)

Step 2: Test the reliability of the evaluation criteria

After building an observation sheet to evaluate the skills of organizing inclusive education of preschool teachers in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, we tested the toolkit by surveying 40 teachers who were teaching at some preschools in Thai Nguyen province.

We used Cronbach's Alpha model in SPSS software to test reliability. The results of analyzing the reliability of the scale showed that the reliability coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha of skill groups in organizing inclusive education of preschool teachers in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam was as follows:

Table 2: Testing the reliability of the scale using Cronbach's Alpha

| No. | Skills Group | Number of items (Corresponding skills) | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----|---|---|---------------------|
| 1 | Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities | 10 | 0.900 |
| 2 | Build individual education plans | 4 | 0.870 |
| 3 | Create an individual education plan | 7 | 0.728 |
| 4 | Organize individual education plans and organize inclusive education activities | 5 | 0.877 |
| 5 | Evaluate results and adjust the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms | 4 | 0.816 |
| 6 | Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education | 10 | 0.694 |

The results of Cronbach's Alpha analysis of the skill groups range from 0.694 to 0.900, showing that the set of criteria used for the survey is appropriate and reliable.

Data processing: The observation form uses 4 levels, we determine the range between the levels and divide the results according to levels as follows:

* Determine range: $(\text{Highest level} - \text{lowest level})/4 = (4 - 1)/4 = 0.75$

* Level division:

$1 \leq M < 1.75$: The teacher's skills are at a weak level

$1.75 \leq M < 2.5$: The teacher's skills are at an average level

$2.5 \leq M < 3.25$: The teacher's skills are at a good level

$3.25 \leq M < 4$: Teachers' skills are at a good level

CURRENT STATUS OF TEACHERS' SKILLS IN ORGANIZING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PRESCHOOLS IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS REGION
CURRENT STATUS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' SKILLS IN ORGANIZING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

We used the evaluation form for organizing inclusive education skills of preschool teachers to evaluate 300 teachers. The result was as follows:

Table 3: Results showing preschool teachers' skills in organizing inclusive education

| Skills Group | M | Rank |
|---|------|------|
| Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities | 2.63 | 4 |
| Build individual education plans | 2.46 | 5 |
| Create an individual education plan | 2.78 | 3 |
| Organize individual education plans and organize inclusive education activities | 2.96 | 1 |
| Evaluate results and adjust the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms | 2.45 | 6 |
| Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education | 2.96 | 1 |

As seen in Table 1, it can be seen that the skill group of the Organize individual education plans and organize inclusive education activities and the Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education are two groups in which teachers perform best with an overall average score of 2.96. Meanwhile, the group of Developing individual educational plans and the skill group of Evaluating results and adjusting the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms as teachers still have limitations with the average score are 2.46 and 2.45 respectively. These are difficult skills in organizing inclusive education in classrooms with children with disabilities learning inclusively.

To clarify the level of achievement of skills in each group of organizing inclusive education of preschool teachers, we analyzed each group of children's skills as follows:

CURRENT STATUS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' SKILLS IN DETERMINING THE ABILITIES AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

To find out the current status of preschool teachers' skills in the Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, we utilized 10 criteria for evaluation. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Level of expression of skills in the group Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|--|-----|------|-------|------|
| Identify children's physical strengths (gross motor, fine motor) | 300 | 3.06 | 0.435 | 1 |
| Identify children's strengths in language | 300 | 2.41 | 0.560 | 10 |
| Identify children's cognitive strengths | 300 | 2.78 | 0.420 | 3 |
| Identify children's strengths in social skills | 300 | 2.59 | 0.499 | 5 |
| Identify desired and unwanted behavior of children | 300 | 2.53 | 0.567 | 6 |

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|---|-----|------|-------|------|
| Identify the child's physical limitations (gross motor, fine motor) | 300 | 2.53 | 0.567 | 6 |
| Identify children's language limitations | 300 | 2.88 | 0.554 | 2 |
| Identify children's cognitive limitations | 300 | 2.34 | 0.483 | 11 |
| Identify children's limitations in social skills | 300 | 2.53 | 0.507 | 6 |
| Identify the child's needs | 300 | 2.78 | 0.659 | 3 |

In Table 4, the skills within the group of skills “Identify the abilities and needs of children with disabilities” by preschool teachers are utilized to assess the current functional level of disabled children. The teachers' skills are assessed from moderate to quite proficient. Specifically, the skills of “Identifying the strengths of children in language” and “Identifying the limitations of children in perception” are skills assessed at a low level with an average score of 2.41 and 2.34 respectively. Ms. D.T.N, Ms. V.A.Q, and many other teachers believe that assessing the overall difficulties of a child in perception, language, physicality, and social skills is a challenging task. While initial assessments can be made through experience indicating some difficulties the child faces, pinpointing the exact level of difficulty is challenging because teachers are not formally trained for this task. Moreover, the school lacks standardized tools to assess the development of children. The skills that teachers are assessed at a fairly high level and highly valued are the skills for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of children in physicality (gross motor development, fine motor skills) with average scores of 3.06 and 2.88 respectively. These are skills that can be used as developmental standards to assess children.

It can be seen that teachers face significant challenges in identifying the abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs of children in the process of caring for and educating them. This has a considerable impact on determining long-term goals, short-term objectives, and individualized education plans for children with disabilities.

CURRENT STATUS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' SKILLS IN BUILDING INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL PLAN GOALS FOR CHILDREN

The current status of preschool teachers' skills in building individual educational plan goals for children in the mountainous region of Northern Vietnam is depicted in the following data table:

Table 5: Level of expression of skills in the group of building goals of individual educational plans for children by preschool teachers

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|--|-----|------|-------|------|
| Develop long-term goals (school year/semester goals) appropriate to the child's characteristics | 300 | 2,47 | 0,642 | 3 |
| Develop short-term goals (monthly goals/topics) consistent with long-term goals and children's characteristics | 300 | 2,41 | 0,641 | 2 |
| Develop goals appropriate to each specific area (physical/language/cognitive/aesthetic/emotional development, social skills) | 300 | 2,39 | 0,647 | 1 |
| Develop weekly/daily goals that are appropriate to the child's long-term goals and characteristics | 300 | 2,58 | 0,581 | 4 |

Through the data in Table 2.5, it is evident that the challenges in accurately assessing the abilities and capacities of children pose significant difficulties for teachers when developing individualized education plan goals for children. This is demonstrated by the difficulties teachers encounter in “Developing short-term goals

(monthly/theme goals) appropriate to long-term goals and the characteristics of the child” and also when “Developing goals appropriate to specific area(physical development/language/cognitive/aesthetic/emotional, social skills)” (with mean scores of 2.41 and 2.39, respectively). Unlike non-disabled children, adjusting educational goals will help children with disabilities achieve a level appropriate to their abilities. Furthermore, identifying appropriate goals will facilitate the assessment of children's progress more smoothly, without pressure to meet standards compared to their peers of the same age. Skills such as “Developing long-term goals (annual/semester goals) appropriate to the child's characteristics" and “Developing weekly/daily goals appropriate to long-term goals and the characteristics of the child” are also assessed at an average to moderately satisfactory level (with mean scores of 2.47 and 2.58, respectively). Setting annual goals and monthly/theme goals is a familiar task for teachers; however, setting goals for children with disabilities is relatively unfamiliar to preschool teachers who lack experience in educating children with disabilities.

CURRENT STATUS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' SKILLS IN DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

To assess the current status of preschool teachers' skills in planning individualized education for children in the Northern mountainous region, we utilized criteria for evaluating preschool teachers' skills in organizing inclusive education. The results obtained are as follows:

Table 6: Level of expression of skills in the group of preschool teachers' individual education planning for children with disabilities

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|---|-----|------|-------|------|
| Identify the elements of an individual education plan | 300 | 2,99 | 0,435 | 1 |
| Identify the main contents of the individual education plan | 300 | 2,71 | 0,560 | 6 |
| Identify measures to implement individualized educational content | 300 | 2,78 | 0,430 | 3 |
| Identify conditions/means for implementing individual educational content | 300 | 2,65 | 0,549 | 7 |
| Identify resources to implement individualized educational content | 300 | 2,77 | 0,564 | 4 |
| Determine the time to implement individual educational content | 300 | 2,76 | 0,558 | 5 |
| Determine expected results when implementing individual educational content | 300 | 2,82 | 0,454 | 2 |

From Table 2.6, it is evident that accurately assessing abilities and establishing individualized educational goals for children will facilitate the educational planning process for children. Despite encountering difficulties, teachers still perform moderately well in “Identifying the factors of the individualized education plan” and “Determining the expected outcomes when implementing individualized education content” (with mean scores of 2.99 and 2.82, respectively). Unlike non-disabled children, adjusting educational goals will help children with disabilities achieve a level appropriate to their abilities. Furthermore, identifying appropriate goals will facilitate the assessment of children's progress more smoothly, without pressure to meet standards compared to their peers of the same age. Skills such as “Identifying the key content in the individualized education plan” and “Identifying the conditions/resources for implementing individualized education content” are assessed at a low level (with mean scores of 2.71 and 2.67, respectively).

CURRENT STATUS OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' SKILLS IN ORGANIZING INCLUSIVE CLASSES

The data on the current status of preschool teachers' skills in organizing inclusive teaching sessions in the Northern mountainous region is illustrated in the table below:

Table 7: Level of expression of skills in the skill group of Organizing inclusive lessons by preschool teachers

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|--|-----|------|-------|------|
| Create an educational plan in an inclusive classroom, which shows adjustments in goals, content, methods, and form of educational organization | 300 | 3,08 | 0,435 | 2 |
| Adjust classroom space appropriately | 300 | 3,21 | 0,560 | 1 |
| Arrange appropriate seating positions for children with disabilities | 300 | 2,98 | 0,420 | 3 |
| Organize classes that involve children with disabilities in learning activities | 300 | 2,81 | 0,499 | 4 |
| Adjust teaching content to suit children with disabilities and organize activities for all children | 300 | 2,72 | 0,567 | 5 |

Through the analysis, it can be seen that there are difficulties in organizing inclusive teaching hours for preschool teachers. This is evident as teachers encounter challenges in “Adjusting teaching content to suit children with disabilities and organizing activities for all children” and teachers also face difficulties in “Organizing lessons that engage children with disabilities in learning activities” (with mean scores of 2.72 and 2.81 respectively). Unlike non-disabled children, adjusting educational activities will help children with disabilities reach a level appropriate to their abilities. At the same time, identifying appropriate goals will facilitate the assessment of children's progress more smoothly, without pressure to meet standards compared to their peers. Skills such as “Arranging appropriate seating positions for children with disabilities”, “Developing educational plans in inclusive classrooms, reflecting adjustments in goals, content, methods, and forms of educational organization”, “Adjusting classroom space appropriately” were rated higher for teachers (with mean scores of 2.98, 3.08, and 3.21 respectively).

Current status of preschool teachers' skills in evaluating and adjusting educational plans for children

The current status regarding preschool teachers' skills in assessing and adjusting education plans for children in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam is depicted in detail in Table 8.

Table 8: Level of expression of skills in the skill group Evaluating and adjusting educational plans for children by preschool teachers

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|---|-----|------|-------|------|
| Evaluate children's results according to lesson plans | 300 | 2,52 | 0,435 | 1 |
| Evaluate children's results according to the goals of the individual education plan | 300 | 2,41 | 0,560 | 3 |
| Know how to choose peer assessment content | 300 | 2,39 | 0,420 | 4 |
| Know how to adjust requirements when evaluating children with disabilities | 300 | 2,48 | 0,499 | 2 |

The analysis in Table 8 indicates that there are considerable difficulties in accurately assessing the abilities and capacities of children, which in turn poses challenges for teachers when developing individual educational goals and plans for them. This is evidenced by the struggles teachers face in "Selecting equivalent assessment content" and also in “Assessing children's outcomes against the goals of the individual education plan” (with respective averages of 2.41 and 2.39). Unlike non-disabled children, adjusting educational goals will assist disabled children in achieving an appropriate level according to their abilities. Furthermore, identifying suitable goals will facilitate a smoother progress evaluation process for children, without undue pressure to meet standards compared to their peers of the same age. Skills such as “Adjusting requirements when assessing disabled children” and “Assessing children's outcomes according to lesson plans” are also assessed at a fairly moderate level for teachers (with averages of 2.48 and 2.52). Accurate assessment based on individual education goals, with

adjustments made for disabled children, will aid in their proper development, while providing teachers with the correct guidance to engage children in school activities.

CURRENT STATUS OF CONSULTING SKILLS FOR SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES IN THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZING AND IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The data illustrating the current status of consulting skills for schools and families involved in organizing and implementing inclusive education in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam is presented in Table 9 as follows:

Table 9: Level of expression of skills in the group of Consulting skills for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education

| Skill | No. | M | SD | Rank |
|---|-----|------|-------|------|
| Detect the number of disabled children in the area, the number who have gone to school and mobilize children to go to school | 300 | 3,23 | 0,435 | 1 |
| Manage records of children with disabilities attending school | 300 | 3,1 | 0,560 | 3 |
| Consulting on school extracurricular activities and factors that create favorable conditions for children to study. | 300 | 2,85 | 0,420 | 7 |
| Attend and evaluate professional meetings on the education of children with disabilities | 300 | 2,82 | 0,499 | 8 |
| Monitor the school's educational activities for children with disabilities | 300 | 2,81 | 0,567 | 9 |
| Learn about the characteristics and concerns of young families | 300 | 3,12 | 0,567 | 4 |
| Coordinate and support parents to care for and educate children with disabilities at home | 300 | 2,88 | 0,554 | 5 |
| Encourage parents of children with disabilities to participate in school/classroom activities | 300 | 2,74 | 0,483 | 10 |
| Respond to the concerns of parents of children without disabilities about children with disabilities and inclusive classrooms | 300 | 2,86 | 0,507 | 6 |
| Resolve situations related to children with disabilities | 300 | 3,21 | 0,659 | 2 |

The table 9 shows that teachers have difficulty in “Encouraging parents of children with disabilities to participate in school/classroom activities” and “Monitor the school's educational activities for children with disabilities”, they also shared that they encountered difficulties in the implementation process because there were few activities “Attending and evaluating professional meetings on the education of children with disabilities” (average scores were 2.74, 2.81 and 2.82 respectively). Unlike children without disabilities, adjustments to educational goals will help children with disabilities achieve a level appropriate to their abilities. At the same time, determining appropriate goals will help the process of evaluating a child's progress go more smoothly, without being constrained by standards compared to peers of the same age. The remaining skills of teachers in the group “Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education” are also rated at a good level (average score from 2.86 to 3.23). Consulting for schools, other teachers and child’s parents is an important job for teachers in preschools, so it is necessary for them to have the skills to meet these tasks.

SOME MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CAPACITY OF PRESCHOOLS TEACHERS IN THE NORTHERN MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS OF VIETNAM

ENHANCING AWARENESS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS, SCHOOLS, AND THE COMMUNITY

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEASURE:

This measure helps teachers and participating forces gain a proper, comprehensive, and profound understanding of the importance and necessity of implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities in preschool.

SIMPLEMENTATION CONTENT:

Develop specific and detailed plans for educational propaganda activities to raise awareness among educational forces inside and outside the school; Choose forms and methods of educational propaganda; The content of educational propaganda focuses on enhancing the basic knowledge and skills of teachers in inclusive teaching for children with disabilities and on creating a favorable environment for living and learning.

FOSTERING AND TRAINING TO IMPROVE THE CAPACITY OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS ON IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEASURE

The aim of fostering and training to improve the capacity of preschool teachers on implementing inclusive education is to enhance their professional competencies. This involves providing them with a comprehensive system of knowledge and skills to work with diverse groups of children, specifically: methods to assess the current functional levels of children, set goals, develop plans, use teaching methods, and skills for monitoring and evaluation, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION CONTENT:

Guiding the establishment of a network of inclusive education teachers in preschools: This network comprises teachers directly involved in inclusive education in preschools, facilitating connections and enabling them to exchange and share their inclusive education experiences.

Developing goals and plans for enhancing knowledge and skills for preschool teachers: This includes identifying training content, sharing inclusive education materials and resources, sharing procedures for developing individual education plans, sharing successful inclusive lesson content, and exchanging knowledge and skills for inclusive teaching.

Providing materials, methodological guidance, and addressing queries for staff and teachers during practical implementation: Furthermore, by enhancing the capacities of key management staff and teachers with good knowledge and training skills, they can conduct in-house training for teachers who have not yet received such training.

DIVERSIFYING METHODS AND FORMS OF CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEASURE:

The objective of diversifying methods and forms of capacity building is to create an environment that promotes the active participation and self-improvement of preschool teachers. This helps teachers engage in self-study and collaboration to transform themselves and develop their competencies. It empowers teachers to choose learning formats that best suit their individual needs.

IMPLEMENTATION CONTENT:

Focused training sessions: These sessions can last from one week to ten days and are conducted at a specific location. This format provides participants with direct information about the processes and conditions for implementing inclusive education activities for children. Additionally, teachers can engage in real-life scenarios to analyze and derive personal lessons. This method ensures a continuous flow of knowledge without interruptions, allowing teachers to concentrate fully on their learning without being distracted by work.

Training through professional group activities at school: This is an organized and mandatory form of training, regularly and systematically conducted in preschools. It fosters a structured approach to professional development.

Training through a connected school model using information technology: This model enables teachers to self-study and enhance their skills and competencies in inclusive education.

Self-study for inclusive education capacity building: Teachers can utilize provided curricula and materials for self-directed learning to improve their skills and knowledge in inclusive education.

APPLYING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN FOSTERING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CAPACITY FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEASURE

Information technology supports effective capacity building activities. It enables teachers to engage in online learning, exchange experiences with other teachers, explore lessons, and refer to open educational resources. Using information technology for online training across school clusters enhances the efficiency of capacity-building activities. IT's interactive nature helps learners quickly understand issues, manage their learning time and location, and study anywhere and anytime using various devices.

IMPLEMENTATION CONTENT:

Enhancing propaganda and promotion of the role and importance of inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Developing high-quality training content that is suitable for the practical conditions of the northern mountainous regions of Vietnam.

Digitizing training content to meet the standards of the training system and ensure compatibility with various devices: computers, smartphones, and tablets.

Establishing a school website to enhance the efficiency of capacity-building activities for inclusive education among preschool teachers.

DISCUSSION

The research indicates that inclusive education is a complex concept and process. Preschool teachers perceive inclusive education as the right of all children to education, as outlined in international documents and domestic laws. They view their work with children with special needs as a duty and responsibility, although they encounter various difficulties due to insufficient professional competencies and inadequate support.

Preschool teachers' skills in organizing inclusive education in the Northern mountainous regions of Vietnam are at a moderate to satisfactory level. They all recognize that to effectively implement inclusive education in preschools, specialized skills are needed for each group of children with disabilities. However, merely participating in short-term training courses or self-study often leads to insufficient mastery of these skills. For inclusive education to be realized and successful, strong institutional support, physical infrastructure, implementation of Individual Education Plans, appropriate vocational training and continuous professional development as well as community engagement to eliminate stigmas and prejudices, are necessary. These findings align with other research that emphasizes the importance of quality teacher programs in shaping positive beliefs and attitudes among educators (Kraskaa, J. & Boyle, C., 2014).

Research findings among the 6 skill groups for organizing and implementing inclusive education, the "Consulting for schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education" group is assessed as being performed at a satisfactory level by teachers. Meanwhile, the "Evaluate results and adjust the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms" and "Build individual education plans" groups are evaluated as being performed at an average level.

The study cross European project on “Inclusive early childhood education” pointed out the inclusive education outcomes in the centre, fed by (2) proximal inclusive education processes, and (3) structural factors within the micro environment of the pre-school; and the more distant influences of (4) inclusive structural factors at community (or meso and exosystem levels), and (5) at national (or macro) levels (Paul, A. et al. 2021). The need for training to enhance the knowledge and skills of preschool teachers in inclusive classrooms has been studied by many authors in many countries (Maria, K. et al., 2023, Kompirović, T. et al. 2023).

CONCLUSION

The research results show that the process of organizing inclusive education has been implemented despite facing many difficulties. However, there have been some initial positive outcomes. During the implementation process, teachers have learned how to identify strengths and weaknesses in six skill groups: Identifying the abilities and needs of children with disabilities; Building individual education plans; Creating individual education plans; Organizing educational plans and inclusive education activities; Evaluating results and adjusting the implementation of educational plans in inclusive classrooms; Consulting with schools and families in the process of organizing and implementing inclusive education.

The previous studies have highlighted the importance of inclusive education for the holistic development and education of children in early childhood. However, inclusive education also presents significant challenges in terms of the pedagogical competence of teachers, particularly in the need for specific skills when working with children with disorders or severe disabilities. To effectively implement inclusive education, certain conditions must be met, including continuous professional development for preschool teachers, flexible education programs, and the development and serious implementation of individual education plans, along with an appropriate educational environment. Furthermore, support from families and society as a whole is essential for the success of inclusive education.

It can be seen that to effectively implement inclusive education in preschools, school administrators and teachers need to continuously improve and enhance their professional skills and competencies in identifying the needs and abilities of children; developing individual education plans; implementing teaching plans and education appropriate to the abilities and strengths of the children; and regularly monitoring and evaluating the results of inclusive education implementation.

LIMITATIONS:

This study is based on the experiences of non-specialist preschool teachers who have participated in short-term training courses (3 to 5 days) on inclusive education and have some understanding of children with disabilities in inclusive classes/groups. However, implementing educational activities for typically developing children alongside children with disabilities in the classroom is challenging for most teachers in the northern mountainous regions of Vietnam, especially in the preschool environment. In the future, we plan to conduct another quantitative study with a larger sample size of preschool teachers to test hypotheses and compare variables related to experience, formal education level, types of professional training (in-service), etc.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude for the financial support provided by the Ministry of Education through the research project with code B2022-TNA-34

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