

## Exploring Inclusive Culture and Practice: The Perspectives of Macao Teachers in Informing Inclusive Teacher Education Programmes in Higher Education

**Authors :** Elisa Monteiro, Kiiko Ikegami

**Abstract :** The inclusion of children with diverse learning needs and/or disabilities in regular classrooms has been identified as crucial to the provision of educational equity and quality for all students. In this, teachers play an essential role, as they have a strong impact on student attainment. Whilst the adoption of inclusive practice is increasing, with potential benefits for the teaching profession, there is also a rise in the level of its challenges in Macao as many more students with learning disabilities are now being included in general education classes. Consequently, there has been a significant focus on teacher professional development to ensure that teachers are adequately prepared to teach in inclusive classrooms that give access to diverse students. Major changes in teacher education will need to take place to include more inclusive education content and to equip teachers with the necessary skills in the area of inclusive practice. This paper draws on data from in-depth interviews with 20 teachers to examine teachers' views of support, challenges, and barriers to inclusive practices at the school and classroom levels. Thematic analysis was utilised to determine major themes within the data. Several themes emerged and serve to illustrate the identified barriers and the potential value of effective teacher education. Suggestions for increased professional development opportunities for inclusive education specific to higher education institutions are presented and the implications for practice and teacher education are discussed.

**Keywords :** inclusion, inclusive practice, teacher education, higher education

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