

THE EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN REGION I

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Abstract

The study was conducted in public elementary schools that give special education for the exceptional children in the different schools in Region I. The respondents are administrators and special education teachers who are directly involved in special education programs for exceptional children. The descriptive - normative - survey method was used in this study and it was supplemented by informal interviews among the administrators and the special education teachers and library research for related studies.

The study was conducted to assess and evaluate the education of exceptional children in the public elementary schools in Region I for the school year 2014 - 2015. Specifically, it determined the 1) extent of attainment of the objectives in educating the exceptional children in Region I; 2) extent of effectiveness of the teaching methods, techniques, and strategies in educating the exceptional children in Region I; 3) extent of effectiveness of the different special education programs in educating the exceptional children in Region I; 4) extent by which the services are provided by the ancillary personnel in the education of exceptional children in Region I; 5) level of adequacy of instructional materials, equipments, and facilities use in educating the exceptional children in Region I; 6) degree of seriousness of the problems encountered in educating the exceptional children in Region I; and 7) degree of need of the measures to improve the education of exceptional children in Region I.

Based on the data gathered, treated and analyzed, the following findings were presented. The school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the objectives in educating the exceptional children are moderately attained as shown by the weighted mean of 4.01 and 4.02, respectively; the school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the methods and techniques are moderately effective as shown by their total weighted mean of 3.67 and 3.84, respectively; the school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the different special education programs are very effective as shown by the total weighted mean of 3.84, and 3.92, respectively; the school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the ancillary personnel services are moderately provided as shown by the total weighted mean of 3.03, and 3.04, respectively; the school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the instructional materials, equipments, and facilities, are moderately adequate as shown by the total weighted mean of 3.09, and 3.05, respectively; the school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the problems encountered in educating the exceptional children are moderately serious as shown by the total weighted mean of 3.36, and 3.32, respectively; and the school administrators and the special education teachers perceived that the measures to improve the education of exceptional children are significantly needed as proven by the total weighted mean of 4.07, and 4.03, respectively.

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn. the objectives in educating the exceptional children are moderately attained; the methods and techniques in educating the exceptional children are moderately effective; the different special programs in educating the exceptional children are very effective; the ancillary services in educating the exceptional children are moderately provided; the instructional materials, equipments, and facilities are moderately adequate; the problems encountered in educating the exceptional children are moderately serious; and the measures needed to improve the education of the exceptional

children are significantly needed.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are; the objectives in educating the exceptional children should be fully attained by the special education teachers with the sincere support of the school administrators, parents and patrons; the special education teachers should use the appropriate methods and techniques that will meet the needs of each group of exceptional children; the different school programs should be implemented to the maximum since these are perceived to be very effective in educating the exceptional children; the ancillary personnel should further provide the services required by the exceptional children; the instructional materials, equipments, and facilities should be very adequately provided by the administrators, SPED teachers, and the parents; the problems encountered in educating the exceptional children should be solved by the administrators, SPED teachers, and parents; the administrators, special education teachers, parents and the ancillary personnel should fully implement the measures to improve the education of exceptional children.

Keywords: Education of Exceptional Children, Public Elementary Schools

1. Introduction

Filipinos have deep regard for education. Education occupies a central place in Philippine political, economic social and cultural life. It has always been strongly viewed as a pillar of national development and a primary avenue for social and economic mobility. A clear evidence of the value placed on education is the proportion of the national government budget going to the sector. The Department of Education (DepEd), the country's biggest bureaucracy is given the highest budget allocation among government agencies each year as required by the 1987 Philippine Constitution. The 1987 Constitution likewise guarantees the right to education of every Filipino. It provided that, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all."

The offering of various curricular programs in Philippine educational system is one of the many responses by the government to address specific needs of learners in the country. These specific curricular programs being offered in basic education are anchored on the premise that individual learners have different learning needs and interests that can be addressed, improved or enhanced, thereby maximizing the potential of these learners. However, the successful implementations of such programs depend on among many factors which include the objectives of SPED, teachers, administrators, instructional materials, equipment, facilities, ancillary personnel and parents.

The fundamental purposes of special education are the same as those of regular education: the optimal development of the student as a skillful, free, and purposeful person, able to plan and manage his or her own life and to reach his or her highest potential as an individual and as a member of society. Indeed, special education developed as a highly specialized area of education in order to provide children with exceptionalities with the same opportunities as other children for a meaningful, purposeful, and fulfilling life.

Perhaps, the most important concept that has been developed in special education as the result of experiences with children with exceptionalities is that of the fundamental individualism of every child. The aspiration of special educators is to see every child as a unique composite of potentials, abilities, and learning needs for whom an educational program must be designed to meet his or her particular needs. From its beginnings, special education had championed the cause of children with learning problems. It is as the advocates of such children and of the concept of individualization that special education can come to play a major creative role in the mainstream of education.

The special competencies of special educators are more than a collection of techniques and skills. They comprise a body of knowledge, methods, and philosophical tenets that are the hallmark of the profession. As professionals, special educators are dedicated to the optimal education of children with exceptionalities and they reject the misconception of schooling that is nothing but custodial care.

The focus of all education should be the unique learning needs of the individual child as a total functioning organism. All educators should recognize and accept that special and regular education shares the same fundamental goals. Special education expands the capacity of schools to respond to the educational needs of all students. As advocates of the right of all children to an appropriate education, special educators affirm their professionalism.

The focus of special education programs is to facilitate access to an appropriate education, regardless of the disability, to help the student achieve academic and life success. Special education programs facilitate academic progress by providing the least restrictive environment and tailoring instruction and assessment to the individual. A written plan, called an Individual Education Program or IEP is drawn up to outline special accommodations and modifications within the educational environment for each special education student. This plan's focus is structuring the elements that drive the educational process -- instruction and assessment -- so that the individual can benefit from the educational environment. Without this specialize educational plan, the student's disability might stymie educational efforts.

Special education students are routinely included in the general education environment, a strategy referred to as inclusion. The inclusion environment not only facilitates academic progress, but also acts to socialize special education students. This socialization is vital to their personal growth and learning social skills that will be useful in the workforce.

Some special education programs are geared toward teaching life skills, such as dressing, personal hygiene, safety, handling money and day to day decision making. Students in these programs are also educated on workplace expectations and often engage in programs that provide workplace training. For example, the local food chain joint may employ one or more of these students during a period of the school day so that they can get some on-the-job experience. These special programs are essential if these students are to eventually enjoy any degree of self-sufficiency.

Special education programs also teach behavior that is appropriate and acceptable by society. Some students with disabilities may exhibit behaviors that are objectionable, offensive or disruptive to social and classroom situations. Special education allows for some tolerance of these behaviors within the instructional environment, as teachers work to educate the student academically and behaviorally. Students who are overly aggressive or exhibit behaviors that are socially inappropriate benefit from special education programs.

2. Special Education in the Philippines

Special education (also known as special needs education, aided education, vocational education, and limb care authority education) is the practice of educating students with special educational needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help learners with special needs achieve a

higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and their community, than may be available if the student were only given access to a typical classroom education.

Common special needs include learning disabilities, communication disorders, emotional and behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, and developmental disabilities. Students with these kinds of special needs are likely to benefit from additional educational services such as different approaches to teaching, the use of technology, a specifically adapted teaching area, or a resource room.

Intellectual giftedness is a difference in learning and can also benefit from specialized teaching techniques or different educational programs, but the term "special education" is generally used to specifically indicate instruction of students with disabilities. Gifted education is handled separately.

Whereas special education is designed specifically for students with special needs, remedial education can be designed for any students, with or without special needs; the defining trait is simply that they have reached a point of under preparedness, regardless of why. Like people of high intelligence can be underprepared if their education was disrupted of any incidents.

In most developed countries, educators modify teaching methods and environments so that the maximum number of students is served in general education environments. Therefore, special education in developed countries is often regarded as a service rather than a place.

When the School for the Deaf and Blind in the Philippines was established in 1907, this was the birth of Special Education (or SPED) in the Philippines. Then, in 1976, the Philippine Association for the Deaf (PAD) spearheaded the Hearing Conservation Week which was born through the Presidential Proclamation 1587, duly signed by then President Ferdinand E. Marcos.

Activities for the Hearing Conservation Week were used to be taken care of by a sole committee but, during the early 80's, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other schools for the deaf were invited. It was also during this time that the celebration of the Hearing Conservation Week, initially the third week of October, be celebrated the third week of November.

In 1991, this time initiated by the Philippine School for the Deaf (PSD) and the Philippine Institute for the Deaf (PID), then President Corazon C. Aquino signed Presidential Proclamation 829 declaring November 10-16 as Deaf Awareness Week (DAW). As stated in the proclamation it is in recognition of the deaf as a vital segment of society which can be transformed into a significant force in the efforts for national development and the need to focus public awareness on deafness, its prevention and rehabilitation.

3. Policies and Guidelines of Special Education in the Philippines

Policies and guidelines shall apply to all schools, centers and classes (national or local, public or private, formal or non-formal) established under the educational system of the Philippines for the education of the learners with special needs.

The state shall promote the right of every individual to relevant quality education regardless of sex, age, creed, socio-economic status, physical and mental condition, social or ethnic origin, political and other affiliation. The state shall therefore promote and maintain equality of access to education as well as the enjoyment of the benefits of education by all its citizens (BP Blg.232).

Every learner with special needs has a right to an education program that is suitable to his needs. Special education shares with regular education basic responsibilities of the educational system to fulfill the right of the child to develop his potential. The ultimate goal of special education shall be the integration or mainstreaming of learners with special needs into the regular school system and eventually into the community.

Provide equal opportunities for all learners with special needs to acquire the knowledge, skills and values necessary for them to adapt to a changing world; develop life skills in all learners to ensure their active and sustained participation in the learning process through relevant programs, projects and enabling policies;

Promote the optimal use of information technology to increase the capability of learners to pursue their own learning; develop learners who actively participate in the economic growth and development of the country; and safeguard the rights of all types of special learners.

4. Legal Bases of Special Education in the Philippines

Special Education in the Philippines is anchored on the following legal documents. Articles 356 and 259 of Commonwealth Act No. 3203, "the right of every child to live in an atmosphere conducive to his physical, moral and intellectual development" and the concomitant duty of the government "to promote the full growth of the faculties of every child."

Republic Act No. 3562: "An Act to Promote the Education of the Blind in the Philippines provided for the formal training of special education teachers of blind children at the Philippine Normal College, the rehabilitation of the Philippine National School for the Blind (PNSB) and the establishment of the Philippine Printing House of the Blind.

Republic Act No. 5250: "An Act Establishing a Ten-Year Teacher Training Program for Teachers of Special and Exceptional Children." provided for the formal training of teachers for deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech handicapped, socially and emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded and mentally gifted and youth at the Philippine Normal College and the University of the Philippines.

Section 8, Article XV of the 1973 Constitution of the Philippines, "A complete, adequate and integrated system of education relevant to the goals of national development."

Articles 3 and 74 of the Presidential Decree No. 603 of 1975, "The emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted child shall be treated with sympathy and understanding and shall be given the education and care required by his particular condition." "Thus, where needs warrant, there shall be at least special classes in every province, and if possible, special schools for the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded, the emotionally disturbed and the mentally gifted. The private sector shall be given all the necessary inducement and encouragement. Presidential Decree No. 1509 of 1978, created the National Commission Concerning Disabled Persons (NCCDP)

Education Act of 1982 or Batas Pambansa Bilang 232, "The State shall promote the right of every individual to relevant quality education regardless of sex, age, breed, socioeconomical status, physical and mental condition, social and ethnic origin, political and other affiliations. The State shall therefore promote and maintain equality of access to education as well as enjoyment of the benefits of education by all its citizens."

Section 24 of BP 232:, "Special Education Services" "the State further recognizes its responsibility to provide, within the context of the formal education system services to meet special needs of certain clientele. These specific types shall be guided by the basic policies of

state embodied on General Provisions of this Act which include the education of persons who are physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, culturally different from the so-called 'normal' individuals that they require modification of school practices/services to develop to their maximum capacity."

Batas Pambansa Bilang 344: "An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons. "required cars, buildings, institutions, establishments and public utilities to install facilities and other devices for persons with disabilities Article XIV, Sections 1 and 2 of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all."

"The State shall provide adult citizens the disabled and out-of-school youth with training in civics, vocational efficiency and other skills." Republic Act No. 7277: Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, An Act Providing For The Rehabilitation, Self-Development And Self-Reliance Of Disabled Person And Their Integration Into The Mainstream Of Society And For Other Purposes. Republic Act No. 9442, An Act Amending Republic Act No. 7277, Otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Persons with Disability as Amended, and for Other Purposes' Granting Additional Privileges and Incentives and Prohibitions on Verbal, Non-Verbal Ridicule and Vilification Against Persons with Disability.

Persons with disability are part of Philippine society, and thus the State shall give full support to the improvement of their total wellbeing and their integration into the mainstream of society. They have the same rights as other people to take their proper place in society. They should be able to live freely and as independently as possible. This must be the concern of everyone the family, community and all government and non-government organizations. Rights of persons with disability must never be perceived as welfare services. Prohibitions on verbal, non-verbal ridicule and vilification against persons with disability shall always be observed at all times.

5. Problems Encountered by SPED Teachers in the Philippines

SPED Teacher Training/Seminar/Workshop/Development

Every year, there are several trainings and seminars for education development and improvement covering different areas in SPED such as programs, career development, research, etc. However, just like any investment, you need to dedicate funds and time to be able to afford these trainings. There are some schools who sponsor their teacher trainings, local school board, but most of the time the SPED teacher will spend for his /her trainings. But, there are some schools that really invest in their teacher's higher education like big universities such as UP, PNU, and Southville International School and Colleges.

SPED Teaching Experience

Teaching experience is very important when applying any job in the Philippines, including teaching. Using job experience, age and gender as a parameter for hiring are already considered discrimination. However, here in the Philippines, these requirements are blatantly advertised in job sections even in leading newspapers. Why is that so?

Well, the standards we were using to review those reports were international laws and apparently the local law here in the Philippines is less strict than the international standard. This leads us to another question? How will our SPED teachers gain experience if no one will hire them because they have no experience?

In China, there are factories which serve as training schools for those who want to go into

manufacturing. In Japan, there are art schools for as young as middle schoolers for those aspiring to be manga artist, game creator, anime writers, etc. But, here in the Philippines, do we have such training schools?

What musical director, Ed Gatchalian, of Rivalry said during the bloggers event for their musical show made me realize a need here in the Philippines? He said that what we lack here in the Philippines are career developers. I agree with him and there are times that I worry that the reason the Filipino youth today does not know what they want to be when they grow up is because they don't have focus. And that in the end, we are making so many Jacks, but no Aces.

SPED Classroom Management

This challenge is a perennial concern not just for SPED teachers for children with developmental disabilities, but if I may say all SPED teachers. Even regular teachers have concern with classroom management. Why?

Because the classroom is our battlefield. This is where the real action happens. Once those pairs of eyes look at you waiting for your next move or word realized that you are not ready for them, you have lost the battle. In my opinion to answer this concern, challenge one and two must be addressed.

SPED Resources

There will come a time when an idea, a speaker, a seminar or even a student will inspire a SPED teacher to make his or her own materials, programs or even method in improving his skills as a SPED teacher. However, the SPED teacher is limited to pursue this idea to its fullest potential because the SPED teacher is hesitating with these questions:

- a. Do I have time for this? – A question of whether blood or coffee is running through your veins.
- b. Do I have enough energy (and brain cells left for this)? – A question of whether taking this project will seal your fate to spinsterhood?
- c. What will I do with my idea after I have materialized it? – A question of return of investment which includes your life energy, social life and even a glimmer of hope for a love life.

Stakeholders Support

The support of the stakeholders really important for the realization of all the goals, objectives and vision in a special education school. Stakeholders includes

- a. the school administration – basically the bosses
- b. the parents – the people spending money so you can get your salary monthly
- c. the government – the lawmakers requiring us to smile even when we are scolding our students.
- d. the curriculum developers – the people responsible why we are reading that research material in our hand right now
- e. the students – the reason for our existence

6. Conclusion

With the limited coverage of existing government educational facilities, equipment, instructional materials, ancillary personnel and trained special education teachers, the Department of Education together with other agencies and partners need to work on the expansion of basic education services to reach more persons with disability. Department of Education should specifically work on the strengthening and expansion of its SPED classes in the existing public elementary and secondary schools and the strengthening and enrichment of its regular classes to mainstream the people with disabilities.

The Philippines continues its dramatic period of improvement, changes in special education services will occur rapidly. Therefore, the suggestions set forth in this paper might contribute to improve the education of exceptional children. First, policymakers should evaluate existing legislation related students with disabilities and those laws' relevance to current trends in providing special education services, taking into consideration successful policy experiences such as the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in United States.

The Department of Education should engage in a professional team annually to evaluate the quality of special education services and present a report that explains these services to public agencies. This report might assist these agencies in providing services, helping them improve their special education services to exceptional children. Another suggestion is to address critical elements of successful inclusion, such as accommodation and modification of general curriculum and collaborations.

Further, the stakeholders' perspectives toward inclusion should be examined through more research to determine the best ways to change their perspectives to be more supportive of these students in a general education setting. Procedures to determine eligibility for special education services should be based on the findings of a multidisciplinary team, as well as the other issues discussed above. Finally, schools should consider providing related services in support of educating the exceptional children.

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Appendix A: Letter to Float Questionnaire

**BAGUIO CENTRAL UNIVERSITY
 GRADUATE SCHOOL
 Baguio City**

Madam/Sir;

The undersigned is presently enrolled in Dissertation Writing at Baguio Central University and is conducting a research study entitled, THE EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN REGION I. In this connection may I request your office to conduct the aforementioned study in Region I.

I anticipate your favorable response to this request.

Thank you and more power.

Very truly yours,

(Sgd) NARCISO D. RABARA
 Researcher

Appendix B: Questionnaire-Checklist

Name: (Optional) _____ School _____
 Position/Designation _____ Division _____
 Class Handled _____

Objectives in education of exceptional children. Using the rating scale below please rate each item below by putting a check (✓) mark in the proper column on the level of attainment of the following objectives in educating the exceptional children. 5 – fully attained ; 4 –attained; 3 –moderately attained; 2- slightly attained; 1 –not attained.

Objectives in Education of Exceptional Children	5	4	3	2	1
to provide the exceptional child the educational opportunities /experiences based on his unique needs					
to develop the maximum potential of the child with special needs to enable him to become self reliant and shall be geared towards providing him opportunities for a happy life					
to develop and maximize learning competencies as well as to inculcate values to make the learner with special needs a useful and effective member of society					
to create educational climate where all children learn together whenever possible regardless of any differences or difficulty that they may have					
to provide equal access to education to every category of exceptional children as an integral part of the educational system					
to develop functional and differential curricular program appropriate to					

the diverse needs of exceptional children					
to develop social skills to break down prejudice among members of society who are afraid to accept people with disabilities					
to foster nurturance of potential to the fullest					
to promote full participation and equality of people with disabilities which encourage his all round development in the family and the community					
to provide early intervention programs for children with disabilities					
To develop the needed competencies for the handi-capped child to reach the level of his normalization					
to develop sports skills and become more physically fit					
to provide optimum development of the individual child to become a skilful, free and purposive persons, able to plan and manage his own life and attain his highest potential in the society					
to provide instruction in orientation and mobility to visually impaired					
to provide activities for voice of speech production					
to create opportunities for language development					
to provide activities that will enable the exceptional child accept his handicap					

Teaching Methods, Techniques and Strategies. Please check the appropriate column on the degree of effectiveness of the following teaching methods, techniques and strategies in educating exceptional children using the following rating scales: 5- very effective, 4- effective; 3 moderately effective; 2-slightly effective; 1 not effective.

Teaching Methods, Techniques and Strategies	5	4	3	2	1
1.Inductive Method					
2..Deductive Method					
3.Lecture Method					
4.Laboratory Method					
5.Expository Method					
6.Brainstorming					
7.Cooperative Learning					
8.Futuristic					
9.Task Analysis					
10.Modelling					
11.Individualization					
12.Oral Aural Method					
13.Total Communication					
14.Clinical Testing					
15.Learning Disabilities Approach					
16.Diagnostic Remedial Teaching					
17.Braille Method					

Programs for Exceptional Children. Please check in the appropriate column on the extent of effectiveness of the following programs for exceptional children using the following rating scales: 5-very effective; 4-effective; 3-moderately effective; 2-slightly effective; 1-not effective.

Programs for Exceptional Children	5	4	3	2	1

1.Residential Schools					
2.Self-contained special classes					
3.Departmentalized special classes					
4.Home-based Instruction					
5.Resource Room					
6.Cooperative class plan					
7.Mainstreaming					
8.Itinerant teacher program					
9.Inclusive education					
10.Acceleration					
11.Ability grouping					
12.Enrichment					

Support Personnel. Please check on the appropriate column the extent of provision of services offered by the following support personnel using the following rating scales: 5-very effective; 4-effective; 3-moderately effective; 2-slightly effective; 1-not effective.

Support Personnel	5	4	3	2	1
1.Diagnostician					
2.Psychologist					
3.Physician					
4.Ophthalmologist					
5.Neurologist					
6.Audiologist					
7.Otologist					
8.Teachers Aides					
9.Private Tutor					
10.Sign Language Interpreter					
11.Speech Therapist					
12.Guidance Counselor					
13.Psychometrician					
14.Physical Therapist					
15.Direct Reader					
16.Social Worker					
17.Speech Language Pathologist					
18. Community Volunteer					
19.Nurse					