

Inclusive Education Program Objectives and Curriculum: A Descriptive Study in the Division of Quezon City

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the program objectives and teaching approaches of special education teachers and school administrators in the Division of Quezon City, Philippines, in promoting an effective inclusive education program for children with special needs. Results show that most respondents indicated that an inclusive education program supports all learners in reaching their full potential by providing appropriate accommodations for them to be successful in the general education setting. However, the majority of the respondents indicated that there is low support in the community for children with special needs to be fully integrated in the community. In terms of curriculum and instruction, most respondents reported using various teaching methods to present appropriate content areas in different ways to accommodate students with special needs. Additionally, most of the respondents noted that they have seen significant learning growth in children with special needs in demonstrating progress through different activities and learning tasks. The study suggests that the Division of Quezon City should provide an in-service training program and seminar-workshops to all teachers about classroom and instruction modification, and appropriate strategies suited to address the needs of children with special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Program Objectives, Curriculum and Instruction, Children with Special Needs

INTRODUCTION

Education is essential to a learner's development. The acquisition of new knowledge, information, and the way one responds to the learning environment make one a holistic learner. All children have the right to have access to a quality education and to meet and address the unique needs of diverse learners to be successful in the general education setting. The 2009 Department of Education Order No. 72 defines inclusive education as the philosophy of accepting all children regardless of race, size, shape, color, ability, or disability with support from school staff, students, parents, and the community [1].

In March 2022, President Rodrigo Duterte signed a law mandating all schools nationwide to ensure inclusive education for learners with disabilities. Republic Act (RA) 11650, otherwise known as “Inclusive Education Act of 2022”, provides that no learner shall be denied admission based on their disability. The new law provides that all schools, whether public or private, shall ensure equitable access to quality education to every learner with disability [2]. Under RA 11560, all learners with disabilities, whether enrolled in public or private schools, shall be conferred services and reasonable accommodation based on the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and shall have the right to avail of the appropriate support and related services.

Special educators and general education teachers often collaborate to provide special education services in an inclusive setting. The common expectation is that students both with and without disabilities will receive instruction from general and special educators working collaboratively in the general education classroom. Due to the least restrictive environment mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA, 2004), more students with disabilities receive most of their instruction in the general education classroom [3]. In addition to differentiating instruction for students with varied academic abilities in the classroom, teachers need empirically based strategies to manage varied student behaviors in the inclusive education setting.

Research revealed that the success in the diversified Philippine inclusive classroom context can be achieved through the interdependence of school community members. The results implied an engaging environment point to having high-standard learning outcomes, promoting collaboration and communication among learners, teachers, and parents, and involving them in decision-making [4].

Additionally, the placement of children with special needs in general education classrooms may be influenced by other factors, while increasing levels of inclusion is associated with beliefs and attitudes, and community support. The study aimed to identify the factors affecting the implementation of inclusive education (IE) in the Philippines, particularly the inclusion of children with special needs. Five factors were posited to influence implementation: policy, resources, beliefs and attitudes of implementing agencies, community support, and implementation structure. The findings implied the necessity of acquiring knowledge and skills on inclusive education, providing facilities and learning materials, engaging therapists, and partnering with parents in addressing the needs of CSNs [5].

Research highlights that teachers should be learning about, experiencing, and practicing inclusive approaches to teaching and learning throughout their professional development to promote inclusive education. The need to match the revision of the materials used in teacher education programs should be seen as essential, and inclusive teaching methodology should be intrinsically linked to and mutually supportive of inclusive curricula. Teacher education institutions in the country were intensely vulnerable to the challenges on policy, curriculum, materials, and methodology. This necessitates that inclusive education policy should be part of the broader dynamics and processes of the policy-making body [6].

Moreover, it was conveyed that inclusive education, through working together through involvement activities for parents, stakeholders, and the entire community provides a great positive impact to the learners, strong support from parents, and awareness to the whole community [7].

Also, higher education institutions in Northern Mindanao, or Region 10, were preparing non-special education elementary school teachers for inclusive education. Analysis revealed few cases of moderate to high coverage of the inclusion competencies in understanding exceptionality, collaboration, inclusive instructional strategies, and inclusive assessment under the professional education courses [8].

Based on the researcher's experiences and observations, there were many instances where teachers and school administrators are not confident in their skills and teaching approaches towards inclusive education in most schools in the Division of Quezon City. Understanding teachers' perception towards Inclusive Education (IE) Program will give a deep dive into information on how to help them to be successful in achieving quality education for ALL learners. The issue in this area, thus, becomes a real and compelling motivation for the researcher to conduct this study.

METHODS

The study used the descriptive comparative method of research. The descriptive research describes the characteristics of the problem, phenomenon, situation, or group under study [9]. This is a type of research specifically designed to deal with complex issues. It aims to move beyond 'just getting the facts' in order to make sense of the myriad other elements involved, such as human, political, social, cultural, and contextual [10]. Likewise, this study used the comparative survey method in gathering data to be answered by School Heads and Special Education Teachers. Descriptive-comparative is a method where the researcher considers at least two entities and establishes a formal procedure for obtaining criterion data on the basis of which he can compare and conclude which of the two is better [11].

The participants of the study were 16 school administrators and 134 special education teachers from the Division of Quezon City, Philippines. The two groups evaluated the effectiveness of the inclusive education program in the Division of Quezon City in terms of Program Objectives and Curriculum and Instructions.

The study used a questionnaire that was constructed by the researcher. One of the objectives of conducting research is to make judgements about the quality of objects or events. Quality can be measured either in an

absolute sense or on a comparative basis. To be useful, the methods of evaluation must be relevant to the context and intentions of the research [10].

The survey questionnaire that was constructed by the researcher was validated and reviewed by the Dean of the College of Education of the New Era University and the Dean of the College of Education of the Philippine Women's University. Also, the survey questionnaire was evaluated and validated by professionals in the field of special education. The tool was assessed by the statistician from the University of the Philippines.

The researcher sends an approval letter asking permission from the Division office if the researcher can be allowed to conduct the study in the public elementary schools in Quezon City. Upon approval, the researcher personally went to the office of the principals in the public elementary schools in Quezon City. The researcher informed the principals of each school of the objective of the study. Upon the approval of the principals, the researcher personally administered the test questionnaire via Google Forms to the Department heads. The researcher sends a personal letter through social media (Facebook Messenger) to connect with the respondents. The research questionnaires were administered via Google Forms. The data gathered was tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted with strict confidentiality. The data collection was completed in (14) Fourteen days. It started on January 23, 2023, and ended on February 6, 2023.

The researcher used descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation, to interpret the collected data. The researcher also utilized the T-Test to determine any significant difference between two variables or groups.

RESULTS

To What Extent Do the School Administrators and Special Education Teachers Assess the Program Objectives of the Inclusive Education Program in the Division of Quezon City?

Table 1 summarizes the extent of the Inclusive Education Program as to the program objectives. The results are presented as Highly Agree (HA), Agree (A), Moderately Agree (MA), Least Agree (LA), and Not Agree (NA). Additionally, the results were assessed using Weighted Mean (WM) and Verbal Interpretation (VI).

As manifested in the Table 1, all indicators assessed by the respondents as extent: all learners are enabled to fulfil his/her potentials by considering individual needs (WM=4.58) rank 1; the diversity of learners helps enrich and strengthen communities and all learners receive holistic learning that can be achieved by giving full support and adequate resources (WM=4.50) rank 2; all learners need appropriate psychosocial support among their peers (WM=4.45) rank 3; the learners' different learning styles and achievements are fairly valued, respected and honored by society (WM=4.42) rank 4; and all learners and the youth are provided with appropriate education in their respective community (WM=4.12) rank 5.

The findings underscore that inclusive culture and values start with the development and enhancement of inclusive concepts and expressions, especially among young children. As such, learners in the standardized curriculum are also levers in the promotion of a just and high-quality inclusive education program through exhibiting competent social skills and behaviors.

Table 1. Assessment of the Program Objectives of the Inclusive Education Program in the Division of Quezon City.

Indicators	School Administrators		Special Education Teachers		Composite Mean	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. The learners' different learning styles and achievements are fairly valued, respected, and honored by society.	4.09	A	4.38	HA	4.24	HA

2. All learners are enabled to fulfil his/her potential by considering individual needs.	4.73	HA	4.44	HA	4.58	HA
3. The diversity of learners helps enrich and strengthen communities.	4.64	HA	4.37	HA	4.5	HA
4. All learners receive holistic learning that can be achieved by giving full support and adequate resources.	4.55	HA	4.45	HA	4.5	HA
5. All learners need appropriate psychosocial support from their peers.	4.45	HA	4.44	HA	4.45	HA
6. All learners and the youth are provided with appropriate education in their respective communities.	4.09	A	4.15	A	4.12	A
Overall Mean	4.42	HA	4.37	HA	4.4	HA

It is imperative for classroom teachers to employ an extensive repertoire of teaching strategies to facilitate experiences that will promote the development and enhancement of social skills among children to build inclusive cultures [12]. Teachers who have a negative attitude towards Inclusive Education (IE) would likely be the ones who would resist integration at the classroom level. Even with the existence of a policy or a law, program and policy implementation happen inside classrooms where teachers possess great authority. Therefore, the efficient implementation of most educational programs and policies happens at the level of classroom teachers. Hence, if teachers take an indifferent attitude towards IE, mainstreaming would not be as successful as it should be, and the concept 'Education for All' shall remain elusive, and nothing but a mere dream resting in the minds of those who should do better [13].

To What Extent Do the School Administrators and Special Education Teachers Assess the Curriculum of the Inclusive Education Program in the Division of Quezon City?

Table 2 summarizes the extent of the Inclusive Education Program as to the curriculum and objectives. The results are presented as Highly Agree (HA), Agree (A), Moderately Agree (MA), Least Agree (LA), and Not Agree (NA). Additionally, the results were assessed using Weighted Mean (WM) and Verbal Interpretation (VI).

As showed in the Table 2, all learners gain knowledge through different modes of content delivery (multiple means of representation) (WM=4.62) rank 1; learners demonstrate knowledge through the use of different activities and learning tasks (multiple means of expression and action) (WM=4.48) rank 2; Learners interact with their teachers, fellow students, and study materials (multiple means of engagement) (WM=4.18) rank 3; learners with Special Need receives specially designed instructions based on their Individual Education Plan (IEP) (WM=4.04) rank 4; and learners receives modified lessons and activities, and a safe and conducive learning environment from the general education classroom (WM=4.05) rank 5. As a whole, the extent of the delivery system of inclusive education as to curriculum and instructions rated by the respondents resulted in an overall mean value of 4.25.

The findings concluded about best practices that include dedication of teachers to teaching children with special needs, appropriate school environment, in-service trainings conducted to teachers handling children with special needs, curriculum modification and support of parents to inclusive education programs, while challenges met consisted of attitude of teachers towards inclusive education, workload of teachers, acceptance of parents having children with special needs, assessment and strategies in handling children with behavioral problem [14]. In contrast, these challenges to fully implement an inclusive education program are a lack of training and support, inadequate resources and facilities, and cultural and social barriers [15]. The findings suggest that policymakers and educators prioritize professional development, resource allocation, and community engagement to promote successful inclusive education.

Table 2. Assessment of the Curriculum of Inclusive Education Program in the Division of Quezon City.

Indicators	School Administrators		Special Education Teachers		Composite Mean	
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI
1. All learners gain knowledge through different modes of content delivery (multiple means of representation).	4.64	HA	4.61	HA	4.62	HA
2. Learners demonstrate knowledge through the use of different activities and learning tasks (multiple means of expression and action).	4.36	HA	4.6	HA	4.48	HA
3. Learners interact with their teachers, fellow students, and study materials (multiple means of engagement)	3.91	A	4.45	HA	4.18	A
4. Learners with Special Need receives specially designed instructions based on their Individual Education Plan (IEP).	3.82	A	4.26	HA	4.04	A
5. Learners receives modified lessons and activities, and a safe and conducive learning environment from the general education classroom.	3.64	A	4.24	HA	3.94	A
Overall Mean	4.07	HA	4.43	HA	4.25	HA
Overall Mean	4.42	HA	4.37	HA	4.4	HA

Is There a Significant Difference Between the Assessment of the Two Groups of Respondents on the Aforementioned Variables?

The Program Objectives got a p-value of 0.76. Hence, there is no significant difference in respondents' assessment, and therefore, this leads to accepting the null hypothesis. The curriculum aspect got a p-value of 0.05. Hence, there is a significant difference in respondents' assessment, and therefore, this leads to rejecting the null hypothesis. Results suggested that further training in handling students with special needs in an inclusive setting should be given emphasis. Additional special education support, opportunities, and resources are needed to increase the level of teachers' readiness for inclusive special education. The Department of Education may continue to act in the full implementation of inclusive special education in all schools, with SPED Center implementing full action in the call for inclusive special education [16].

Table 3. The Significant Difference on the Effectiveness of Inclusive Education Program in the Division of Quezon City.

Areas	Mean		t-value	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
	School Administrators	Special Education Teachers				
Program Objectives	4.42	4.37	-0.3	0.76	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Curriculum	4.07	4.43	1.99	0.05	Significant	Reject Ho

Note: Level Significant at .05, Degree of Freedom at 45, Critical t-value at 2.021

CONCLUSION

Assessment of Inclusive Education Program in terms of program objectives and curriculum is evident in both school administrators and special education teachers. There is no significant difference between school administrators and special education teachers on the assessment of the inclusive education program in the areas of program objectives and curriculum.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that it is encourage that all school administrators and special education teachers be encouraged to attend trainings, seminars, and workshops about the Inclusive Education Program. Also, it is highly recommended to take up graduate units or a degree in special education to have in-depth knowledge in dealing with various problems that may be encountered by some learners who may have exceptional educational needs. Additionally, establish collaboration between school heads and teachers who have specialized training in special education, specifically in the inclusive education program. This is integral to the effective instructions and the successful implementation of inclusive education. And lastly, further research should be undertaken on topics related to inclusive education, so that appropriate attention can be given to children with special needs.

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