

The Lived Experiences of Teachers from the Special Education Program Of Guiuan North District

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Abstract:

Special education teachers have an especially difficult job of not only teaching and managing their students, but also handling the paperwork and making sure accommodations and modifications are being met in the classroom. (A-State, 2016)

Even with this, there are still a lot of children with special needs that are not able to attend schools, specifically in Guiuan, Eastern Samar along with its neighboring towns of Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar. The purpose of this study is to see the difficulties encountered by teachers who are teaching children with special needs as well as the difficulties encountered by the pupils. More importantly, this study aims to know if one school offering the special education program is enough to cater the municipalities of Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, three (3) neighboring towns of Eastern Samar. This study specifically aims to answer the following questions; 1. What are the problems encountered by Special Education Teachers in Guiuan, Eastern Samar? 2. What are the Special Education teacher’s teaching experience? 3. How do the Special Education teachers manage their Special Education classrooms? 4. What are the Special Education resources in the school? 5. How important is the stakeholder’s support for Special Education? This study is focused on the special education program of Lupok Central Elementary School of Guiuan North District, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, the only school to offer a special education program in Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar. The research design to be used in this study is qualitative research design, phenomenological type to gather the necessary data. The study was conducted in Guiuan North District, specifically in Lupok Central Elementary School. It is the only school within the three municipalities of Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar to offer special education. The respondents of the study were the (only) 2 Special Education teachers. The results of the study concluded that, indeed there is really a lack of budget, and the poor monitoring of Inclusive Education. There is also a shortage of schools offering this kind of program, and shortage of teachers trained and willing to be trained to teach special education. There is also lack of (clinical) psychologists and psychiatrists who are to refer cases from regular to special and vice versa. Very few are enrolled in the program also because of the lack of acceptance, awareness and participation from parents who have children with special needs.

Keywords —*SPED, Special Education, SPED Implementation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A teaching career has many challenges inside and outside the classroom. Special education teachers have an especially difficult job of not only teaching and managing their students, but also handling the paperwork and making sure accommodations and modifications are being met in the classroom. (A-State, 2016)

Education is a fundamental human right. But the status of public special education (SPED) in the Philippines reveals a sad reality. It is faced with challenging issues which are basically systemic. It includes lack of funding irrelevant and unresponsive curriculum, mass exodus of SPED teachers, obsolete learning resources, lack of facilities, and the lack of support from school administrators. Even more heart-breaking is that the whole school community is not ready yet to accept children with autism and other special needs. Parents of typical children in the public school question why students with disabilities are accepted and integrated with regular students. The usual 60:1 student-teacher ratio complicates an already complex situation. Parents of regular students worry that the inclusion of students with special needs will aggravate the inadequate number of teachers and classrooms. Parents of children with autism, on the other hand, worry about how much quality time can be given to the special needs of their children. (Koe, D., 2010)

Education should enhance teachers who teach children with developmental disability and also create awareness in the society to accept children with special educational needs. However, children with developmental disability need extra attention in terms of curriculum adaptation, teaching methods, and availability of teaching and learning materials, assistive technology, assessment systems, as well as resources and funds for more assistance in adapting the school environment. (Udoba, 2014)

In line with the Department's thrust in providing quality and inclusive basic education for all, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to provide the necessary educational interventions for learners with certain exceptionalities through its Special Education (Sped) program. The Sped program of DepEd provides a holistic approach in catering to the needs of learners with various exceptionalities. This program ensures that learners with exceptionalities will have access to quality education by giving them their individual and unique learning needs. This initiative caters to learners with visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual

disability, learning disability, autism spectrum disorder, communication disorder, physical disability, emotional and behavioral disorder, multiple disability with visual impairment, and to those who are orthopedically handicapped, chronically ill, and gifted and talented. To date, DepEd has recognized a total of 648 Sped Centers and regular schools offering the program—471 of which are catering to elementary students and 177 are catering to High School students. The Education Department has recorded around 250,000 enrollees with certain exceptionalities at the elementary level and around 100,000 at the high school level in School Year (SY) 2015-2016. (S Philippines, 2017)

Even with this, there are still a lot of children with special needs that are not able to attend schools, specifically in Guiuan, Eastern Samar along with its neighboring towns of Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to see the difficulties encountered by teachers who are teaching children with special needs as well as the difficulties encountered by the pupils. More importantly, this study aims to know if one school offering the special education program is enough to cater the municipalities of Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, three (3) neighboring towns of Eastern Samar. This study specifically aims to answer the following questions;

1. What are the problems encountered by Special Education Teachers in Guiuan, Eastern Samar?
2. What are the Special Education teacher's teaching experience?
3. How do the Special Education teachers manage their Special Education classrooms?
4. What are the Special Education resources in the school?
5. How important is the stakeholder's support for Special Education?

Scope and Delimitation of Study

This study is focused on the special education program of Lupok Central Elementary School of Guiuan North District, Guiuan, Eastern Samar, the only school to offer a special education program in Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar.

The study was conducted in Guiuan North District, specifically in Lupok Central Elementary

School. It is the only school within the three municipalities of Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar to offer special education.

Significance of the Study

Specifically, the outcomes of this study aims to benefit the following;

Pupils with special needs. So that they may have a school to go to where their individual needs will be addressed. And more importantly, enjoy their rights to education, just like any other children –without prejudice and without being bullied.

Parents. The parents of children with special needs have already a lot of burden to carry as they would want their children to be well attended to and at the same time enjoy the same benefits as any other children would, this study aims to help them lessen that burden, to at least aid them financially as they would not go to far places just so their children with special needs can be sent to school.

Teachers. So that they can focus on attending to their children while not denying the rights to education of the children with special needs as these children will be taught and focused on by Special Education teachers.

Special Education Teachers. So that their numbers will be increased, and special education teachers will focus on children with their special needs, such as teachers specializing in teaching blind children, teachers teaching pupils with mental retardation, and the like. This study also aims in improving the budget given to schools offering special education.

School Administrators. To help them justify the need to have bigger budget and more teachers to help in teaching children with special needs and in acquiring facilities that would be used in improving the teaching and learning processed for special education.

Education Department. For them to know that there are so many children with special needs in the country, most specially in Eastern Samar that have no access in education.

Future Researchers. The data gathered in this study will help them answer the questions in their future study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in two ways – conceptual and operational –in order to have a better understanding of the presentation of the study.

Disability. A physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses or activities. In this study, the term is used in the same manner.

Human Right. A right that is believed to belong justifiably to every person. In this study, the term is about the rights of every child to education.

Lived Experiences. In qualitative phenomenological research, lived experience refers to a representation of the experiences and choices of a given person, and the knowledge that they gain from these experiences and choices.

In this study, the term means the same.

Special Education. is a form of learning provided to students with exceptional **needs**, such as students with learning disabilities or mental challenges.

In this study, the term means the same.

II. RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Related Literature

The growth of special education in the Philippines has been given a relatively good support all these years both by the government, non-government organizations and stakeholders in response to the needs and challenges of the times. The level of awareness of both the government and the private sector in providing equal opportunities to children with special needs have considerably increased. One positive development in special education is the implementation of Republic Act 7277, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, an Act providing for the rehabilitation, self-development and self-reliance of disabled persons and their integration into the mainstream of society. In support of this legislation, the Department of Education has directed all school divisions in the country to establish Special Education Centers to help provide effective delivery of special education services nationwide. Although special education in the country started 94 years ago, in many respects, the demands and needs of this program have not changed. The advent of the 21st century requires new perspectives and directions in special education to meet the needs of the disadvantaged children against the persistent challenges and demands of the new millenium. Special Education in the Country Several years back, Dr.Teresita G. Inciong in her country report in practically the same Forum, cited some problems and concerns which beset the SPED program in the country. In partnership efforts with other government agencies, non-government organizations and other stakeholders, we are slowly generating positive results. Below are some of the concerns besetting the

SPED programs which have been correspondingly addressed:

Inadequate Special Education Services Throughout the Country. Since 1994 or in a span of 6 years, there's a steady increase in the number of clients being served in schools. This may be attributed to the availability of teachers trained in special education. While there is still a good number of special children who are unaccounted for, either they are out of school or in school but have not been identified, somehow it can be told that the SPED program in the country is now a "milestone towards making a dream". The implementation of the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons has strongly supported the possible improvement of the delivery of special education services.

Limited Facilities, Materials and Equipment for Systematic and Scientific Early Identification and Screening Procedure This remains a drawback in some of the public elementary schools with SPED programs. Except a handful of schools like the Philippine School for the Deaf (PSD) which is one of the special schools in the country. PSD has acquired a state of the art building from Hongkong-Shanghai Banking Corporation equipped with modern facilities and equipment which facilitates accurate and scientific screening procedure for early identification of children with hearing problems. In the same manner, from the private sector specifically St. Lukes Hospital and the University of Santo Tomas Hospital provide services like Infant Screening as early as 2 days old.

Early Intervention Program Is Not Sufficient An initiative has been undertaken by the SPED Division of the Department of Education in collaboration with ChristoffelBlinden-mission International, an NGO in conducting Training Workshops since 1998 for SPED and regular teachers, social workers and parents of children with disabilities for them to be trained in the home teaching process using the Portage Guide to Early Intervention. Early childhood care education has been our focus in recent years by training preschool regular teachers on inclusive education and early intervention. The University of the Philippines - Philippine General Hospital (UP-PGH), Department of Rehabilitation Medicine

and the Rotary Club of Manila San Miguel has put up a hospital-based pre-school building where appropriate educational intervention is provided by a teacher from the Division of City Schools, Manila. Moreover, the participation of the private sector is evident. St. Francis K-6 Inclusive School, a private school in Metro Manila with funding assistance from Japan Ear Foster Parent provides early intervention program for children with special needs.

Fast Turn-Over of Special Education Teachers A good number of SPED trained teachers has left the service in favor of a better pay offered by schools abroad. Or, some easily get promoted to higher positions. One way of holding back teachers from leaving their jobs is to provide incentives and welfare benefits. The Department of Education issued DECS Order No. 5, s. 1998 which articulates among others the need to reclassify regular teacher's items to special education teachers' items. In other words, salaries of regular teachers who are actually providing educational services to children with special needs are upgraded 3 grades higher than the salary grade the teacher is receiving.

Imbalance Between the Demand and Supply for SPED-Trained Personnel Institutionalization of the SPED program in regular schools was mandated through DECS Order No. 26, s. 1997. This was deemed important to be able to address the increasing demand of clients with special needs in the light of the dearth of trained SPED teachers. Through the directive all school divisions throughout the country are required to organize at least one SPED Center in each school division. Recently, the Special Education Division in collaboration with ChristoffelBlindenmission International conducted training workshops by cluster regions in Luzon to train trainers on inclusive education who will in turn take the role of training the regular teachers within their localities. Similarly, other NGOs like the Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI), Philippine Foundation for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled (PFRD), KatipunannngMaykapansanansaPilipinas, Inc (KAMPI) and the Personnel Managers Association of the Philippines (PMAP) take active role in the exercise of capability building

and preparing our teachers especially the regular teachers in handling children with special needs.

Attitudinal Barrier This is the worst barrier and considered very critical especially in the implementation of a viable and systematic special education program. Information dissemination campaigns and strengthening the advocacy programs through parent education, orientation sessions with the regular teachers, school administrators, other school personnel, the students and the community helped a lot in the gradual removal of this barrier. Recent developments showed that the Commission on Higher Education has directed all teacher-training institutions to offer in the curriculum units in special education. This will entitle each prospective teacher gain and equip himself/herself the knowledge and skills of handling children with special needs. The role of the teachers in educating all caregivers is crucial which in the process will help reduce this menace.

Lack of Coordination Among Government Agencies in the Provision of Programs and Services While there are no consolidated efforts in coming up a systematic program from identification to transition of children with special needs before, this time the Department of Social Welfare and Development through the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP) has taken the lead role in this task. Inter-agency meetings among departments of the government are regularly held to thresh out issues and concerns and map out plans for the benefit of the marginalized sector.

Dearth of Researches and Studies re Children with Special Needs The field of special education has in recent years gained recognition among enthusiasts, like teachers and even parents to embark into research and furthering their studies along the area of special education most especially on inclusive education. This is a positive development in special education especially with the offering of special education units in the curriculum of teacher-training institutions or in the pre-service level. With special education as the chosen area, it is expected in a few years' time we will be generating a good source of data we can use in program development and improvement. (Ebol, S., 2001)

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 specialized 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.

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.

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, socio-economic 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.

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. (Rabara, N., 2017)

With the growing numbers of students with learning disabilities being included in the general education classroom and the pressures of state accountability assessments, classroom teaching has become more complex. Inclusion calls for general education teachers (GETs) and special education teachers (SETs) to form partnerships that require a new role for special educators who previously were able to provide instruction for students with learning disabilities using materials and instructional approaches in a resource room setting outside of the general education classroom. Assuming the role of an inclusion teacher, SETs instruct students with LD in inclusive general education classrooms using materials from the general education curriculum. Although some information exists on the role of the resource room teacher (Gickling, Murphy, & Mallory, 1979; Whittaker & Taylor, 1995; McQuarrie&Zarry, 1999), the role of the inclusion teacher is not clear (Idol, Nevin, Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1994; Larrivee, Semmel, & Gerber, 1997), Klingner& Vaughn, 2002; Pugach& Johnson, 1995).

Since the passage of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) in the mid 1970's, through the period of the Regular Education Initiative in the 1980's, and on to the current focus on inclusion, the field of special education has been gradually yet consistently undergoing substantial changes. Such shifts have propelled marked changes in the work roles and responsibilities of special education teachers. As articulated by Ferguson and Ralph (1996), this role shift represents a movement toward merging the parallel systems of general and special education into a single unified system, and for special education teachers (SETs), this shift in role threatens a loss of the very core of what makes special education special. A key consideration is the extent to which a special education teacher's job, as it is currently designed, allows a SET to be effective in performing her daily work requirements. Gersten, Keating and Yovanoff (1995) found a relationship between role conflict and dissatisfaction experienced by SETs in their current assignment and their intent to leave the field of special education. Their study asked the questions: Does the job of a special education teacher make sense? Is it feasible? Is it one that a well-trained, interested, special education professional can manage in order to accomplish the objective of enhancing a students'

academic competence? They found significant stress occurs when, due to poor job design, a discrepancy exists between what teachers believe are their roles and responsibilities and the realities of their daily work practices. A direct relationship exists between a teacher's experience of role dissonance and her intent to quit her job as a special education teacher (Billingsley, 2004). The value of special education, once the hallmark of instruction described as carefully planned, intensive, urgent, relentless, and goal-directed (Zigmond, 2001), has been questioned in recent years, translating into confusion regarding the role of the special educator in inclusive schools. It is increasingly difficult to find consistent viewpoints on questions such as the goals of special education programs, the roles and priorities for special educators, and the ways in which special educators should organize their activities and spend their time (Billingsley, 2004). Special educators (SETs) have the tasks of ensuring that students with disabilities are progressing towards the same state standards as their non-disabled peers, addressing their individualized education goals, and providing opportunities to access the general education curriculum with few precedents available to guide them in this work. As districts move toward greater inclusion of students with learning disabilities in their schools (McLeskey, Henry, & Axelrod, 1999), special educators find themselves struggling with changing roles and often increased responsibilities. Excessive and competing responsibilities make it difficult for special educators to function effectively in inclusive classrooms (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Billingsley, 2004). A recent report by the Council for Exceptional Children (2000) suggested that many new special education teachers find they have been prepared for jobs that no longer exist and that they are not equipped for the jobs they face. Studies that clarify the role of the special education teacher in the age of accountability could direct the kinds of pre-service and professional development opportunities that special education teachers need in order to decrease role dissonance and increase retention of SETs in the field. As noted by Kauffman, (1994), the training special educators receive must distinguish their role from that of general education teachers. The skills needed to provide individualized, intensive, remedial instruction to a few students are different from those required to teach a whole class of students (Zigmond & Baker, 1995, Katsafanas, J. 2001)

Conceptual framework

This study is anchored on the following theories;

Behaviorism is a perspective on learning that focuses on changes in individuals' observable behaviors— changes in what people say or do. In classrooms, behaviorism is most useful for identifying relationships between specific actions by a student and the immediate precursors and consequences of the actions. It is less useful for understanding changes in students' thinking; for this purpose we need theories that are more cognitive (or thinking-oriented) or social, like the ones described later in this chapter. This fact is not a criticism of behaviorism as a perspective, but just a clarification of its particular strength or usefulness, which is to highlight observable relationships among actions, precursors and consequences. Behaviorists use particular terms (or "lingo," some might say) for these relationships. One variety of behaviorism that has proved especially useful to educators is operant conditioning, described in the next section.

Operant conditioning: new behaviors because of new consequences

Operant conditioning focuses on how the consequences of a behavior affect the behavior over time. It begins with the idea that certain consequences tend to make certain behaviors happen more frequently. If I compliment a student for a good comment made during discussion, there is more of a chance that I will hear further comments from the student in the future (and hopefully they too will be good ones!). If a student tells a joke to classmates and they laugh at it, then the student is likely to tell more jokes in the future and so on.

The original research about this model of learning was not done with people, but with animals. One of the pioneers in the field was a Harvard professor named B. F. Skinner, who published numerous books and articles about the details of the process and who pointed out many parallels between operant conditioning in animals and operant conditioning in humans (1938, 1948, 1988). Skinner observed the behavior of rather tame laboratory rats (not the unpleasant kind that sometimes live in garbage dumps). He or his assistants would put them in a cage that contained little except a lever and a small tray just big enough to hold a small amount of food. (Figure 1 shows the basic set-up, which is sometimes nicknamed a "Skinner box.") At first the rat would sniff and "putter around" the cage at random, but sooner or later it would happen upon the lever and eventually happen to press it. Presto! The lever released a small pellet of food, which the rat would promptly eat. Gradually the rat would spend more time near the lever and press the lever more

frequently, getting food more frequently. Eventually it would spend most of its time at the lever and eating its fill of food. The rat had “discovered” that the consequence of pressing the level was to receive food. Skinner called the changes in the rat’s behavior an example of operant conditioning, and gave special names to the different parts of the process. He called the food pellets the reinforcement and the lever-pressing the operant (because it “operated” on the rat’s environment).

Operant conditioning and students’ learning: Since the original research about operant conditioning used animals, it is important to ask whether operant conditioning also describes learning in human beings, and especially in students in classrooms. On this point the answer seems to be clearly “yes.” There are countless classroom examples of consequences affecting students’ behavior in ways that resemble operant conditioning, although the process certainly does not account for all forms of student learning (Alberto & Troutman, 2005). Consider the following examples. In most of them the operant behavior tends to become more frequent on repeated occasions:

A seventh-grade boy makes a silly face (the operant) at the girl sitting next to him. Classmates sitting around them giggle in response (the reinforcement).

A kindergarten child raises her hand in response to the teacher’s question about a story (the operant). The teacher calls on her and she makes her comment (the reinforcement).

Another kindergarten child blurts out her comment without being called on (the operant). The teacher frowns, ignores this behavior, but before the teacher calls on a different student, classmates are listening attentively (the reinforcement) to the student even though he did not raise his hand as he should have.

A twelfth-grade student—a member of the track team—runs one mile during practice (the operant). He notes the time it takes him as well as his increase in speed since joining the team (the reinforcement).

A child who is usually very restless sits for five minutes doing an assignment (the operant). The teaching assistant compliments him for working hard (the reinforcement).

A sixth-grader takes home a book from the classroom library to read overnight (the operant). When she returns the book the next morning, her teacher puts a gold star by her name on a chart posted in the room (the reinforcement).

These examples are enough to make several points about operant conditioning. First, the process is

widespread in classrooms—probably more widespread than teachers realize. This fact makes sense, given the nature of public education: to a large extent, teaching is about making certain consequences (like praise or marks) depend on students’ engaging in certain activities (like reading certain material or doing assignments). Second, learning by operant conditioning is not confined to any particular grade, subject area, or style of teaching, but by nature happens in every imaginable classroom. Third, teachers are not the only persons controlling reinforcements. Sometimes they are controlled by the activity itself (as in the track team example), or by classmates (as in the “giggling” example). This leads to the fourth point: that multiple examples of operant conditioning often happen at the same time. A case study in Appendix A of this book (The decline and fall of Jane Gladstone) suggests how this happened to someone completing student teaching.

Because operant conditioning happens so widely, its effects on motivation are a bit complex. Operant conditioning can encourage intrinsic motivation, to the extent that the reinforcement for an activity is the activity itself. When a student reads a book for the sheer enjoyment of reading, for example, he is reinforced by the reading itself, and we can say that his reading is “intrinsically motivated.” More often, however, operant conditioning stimulates both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation at the same time. The combining of both is noticeable in the examples in the previous paragraph. In each example, it is reasonable to assume that the student felt intrinsically motivated to some partial extent, even when reward came from outside the student as well. This was because part of what reinforced their behavior was the behavior itself—whether it was making faces, running a mile, or contributing to a discussion. At the same time, though, note that each student probably was also extrinsically motivated, meaning that another part of the reinforcement came from consequences or experiences not inherently part of the activity or behavior itself. The boy who made a face was reinforced not only by the pleasure of making a face, for example, but also by the giggles of classmates. The track student was reinforced not only by the pleasure of running itself, but also by knowledge of his improved times and speeds. Even the usually restless child sitting still for five minutes may have been reinforced partly by this brief experience of unusually focused activity, even if he was also reinforced by the teacher aide’s compliment. Note that the extrinsic part of the reinforcement may sometimes be more easily observed or noticed than the intrinsic part, which by definition may sometimes only

be experienced within the individual and not also displayed outwardly. This latter fact may contribute to an impression that sometimes occurs, that operant conditioning is really just “bribery in disguise,” that only the external reinforcements operate on students’ behavior. It is true that external reinforcement may sometimes alter the nature or strength of internal (or intrinsic) reinforcement, but this is not the same as saying that it destroys or replaces intrinsic reinforcement.

Psychological constructivism: the independent investigator

The main idea of psychological constructivism is that a person learns by mentally organizing and reorganizing new information or experiences. The organization happens partly by relating new experiences to prior knowledge that is already meaningful and well understood. Stated in this general form, individual constructivism is sometimes associated with a well-known educational philosopher of the early twentieth century, John Dewey (1938–1998). Although Dewey himself did not use the term constructivism in most of his writing, his point of view amounted to a type of constructivism, and he discussed in detail its implications for educators. He argued, for example, that if students indeed learn primarily by building their own knowledge, then teachers should adjust the curriculum to fit students’ prior knowledge and interests as fully as possible. He also argued that a curriculum could only be justified if it related as fully as possible to the activities and responsibilities that students will probably have later, after leaving school. To many educators these days, his ideas may seem merely like good common sense, but they were indeed innovative and progressive at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Another recent example of psychological constructivism is the cognitive theory of Jean Piaget (Piaget, 2001; Gruber & Voneche, 1995). Piaget described learning as interplay between two mental activities that he called assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the interpretation of new information in terms of pre-existing concepts, information or ideas. A preschool child who already understands the concept of bird, for example, might initially label any flying object with this term—even butterflies or mosquitoes. Assimilation is therefore a bit like the idea of generalization in operant conditioning, or the idea of transfer described at the beginning of this chapter. In Piaget’s viewpoint, though, what is being transferred to a new setting is not simply a behavior (Skinner’s “operant” in operant conditioning), but a mental representation for an object or experience.

Social Constructivism: assisted performance

Unlike Piaget’s orientation to individuals’ thinking in his version of constructivism, some psychologists and educators have explicitly focused on the relationships and interactions between a learner and other individuals who are more knowledgeable or experienced. This framework often is called social constructivism or sociocultural theory. An early expression of this viewpoint came from the American psychologist Jerome Bruner (1960, 1966, 1996), who became convinced that students could usually learn more than had been traditionally expected as long as they were given appropriate guidance and resources. He called such support instructional scaffolding—literally meaning a temporary framework like the ones used to construct buildings and that allow a much stronger structure to be built within it. In a comment that has been quoted widely (and sometimes disputed), Bruner wrote: “We [constructivist educators] begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development.” (1960, p. 33). The reason for such a bold assertion was Bruner’s belief in scaffolding—his belief in the importance of providing guidance in the right way and at the right time. When scaffolding is provided, students seem more competent and “intelligent,” and they learn more.

Similar ideas were independently proposed by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), whose writing focused on how a child’s or novice’s thinking is influenced by relationships with others who are more capable, knowledgeable, or expert than the learner. Vygotsky made the reasonable proposal that when a child (or novice) is learning a new skill or solving a new problem, he or she can perform better if accompanied and helped by an expert than if performing alone—though still not as well as the expert. Someone who has played very little chess, for example, will probably compete against an opponent better if helped by an expert chess player than if competing against the opponent alone. Vygotsky called the difference between solo performance and assisted performance the zone of proximal development (or ZPD for short)—meaning, figuratively speaking, the place or area of immediate change. From this social constructivist perspective, learning is like assisted performance (Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). During learning, knowledge or skill is found initially “in” the expert helper. If the expert is skilled and motivated to help, then the expert arranges experiences that let the novice to practice crucial skills or to construct new knowledge. In this regard the expert is a bit like the

coach of an athlete—offering help and suggesting ways of practicing, but never doing the actual athletic work himself or herself. Gradually, by providing continued experiences matched to the novice learner’s emerging competencies, the expert-coach makes it possible for the novice or apprentice to appropriate (or make his or her own) the skills or knowledge that originally resided only with the expert.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study is qualitative research design, phenomenological type to gather the necessary data.

Qualitative research design is a research method used extensively by scientists and researchers studying human behavior, opinions, themes and motivations. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations.

Phenomenology has its roots in a 20th century philosophical movement based on the work of the philosopher Edmund Husserl. As research tool, phenomenology is based on the academic disciplines of philosophy and psychology and has become a widely accepted method for describing human experiences. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that is used to describe how human beings experience a certain phenomenon. A phenomenological study attempts to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about human experiences, feelings, and responses to a particular situation. It allows the researcher to delve into the perceptions, perspectives, understandings, and feelings of those people who have actually experienced or lived the phenomenon or situation of interest. Therefore, phenomenology can be defined as the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced by people living those experiences. Phenomenological research is typically conducted through the use of in-depth interviews of small samples of participants. By studying the perspectives of multiple participants, a researcher can begin to make generalizations regarding what it is like to experience a certain phenomenon from the perspective of those that have lived the experience.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Guiuan North District, specifically in Lupok Central Elementary School. It is the only school within the three municipalities of Guiuan, Mercedes and Salcedo, Eastern Samar to offer special education.



Figure 1. Map showing the locale of the study

To gather information, the researchers conducted open –ended interviews and observations. These will be recorded through cellular phones, recorders, cameras and other related media. This will be done with the approval and consent of all concerned, specially the respondents.

Data Analysis

In this study, the analysis of the collected data was done by transcribing the recorded files, writing down all the things that have been observed on the research locale and by simplifying, summarizing, and interpreting all the collected printed data. The data analysis will be divided into parts, depending on the themes that will be a product of the data gathering.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result and Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the data gathering as well as the discussions of these results.

Photo Documentation of Interview and School Visit



Interview with the respondents



A Corner of the Special Education Classroom

the
l. It
also reveals the important learnings and insights and
relates them back to the literature. Implications were then
deducted from the findings and finally, the
recommendations were then proposed.

Summary of the Findings

To dig deeper into the lived experiences of teachers from the Special Education Program of Guiuan North District, the following were the objectives of the study;

1. What are the problems encountered by Special Education Teachers in Guiuan, Eastern Samar?
2. What are the Special Education teacher's teaching experience?
3. How do the Special Education teachers manage their Special Education classrooms?
4. What are the Special Education resources in the school?
5. How important is the stakeholder's support for Special Education?

Theme 1: Problems Encountered

Subtheme A: Funding

As with any project or program, plans will never be realized nor successful without proper and appropriate funding. In this case, the Special Education Program budget and funding is catered by the school's MOOE and does not have its own special education budget due to the integration of these classes to regular classes through the inclusive education program.

Respondent 1: Lacking funds for instructional materials for both teacher and student use.

Respondent 2: Lack of Funds

Subtheme B: Acceptance from the community

Respondent 1: Sometimes lack of support from community (bullying the pupils/discrimination), also lack of support from parents (like sending the pupils to therapy, follow-up on their learnings, home tutoring). Parents are also in denial of their children's condition.

Respondent 2: Support system (Multi-Disciplinary Teams (for example – psychologists and Psychiatrists) *Respondent 1 butting in; "yes, we have problems with teachers immediately diagnosing problematic students without consulting professionals such as the psychiatrists, they tend to easily pass to us this problematic students. The Grade 1 teachers have had their training in handling these kids. When I mainstream some kids, they always ask "diri it hiyamakatuyawdidahitonklase?" "Will s/he not be a burden if included in my class?"*

Subtheme C: Lack of Training

Respondent 1: Teachers lacking training (not only the SPED teachers but as well as the teachers teaching regular classes) these teachers cannot accept or easily those that have been mainstreamed because they do not know how to handle them.

Respondent 2: Comprehensive training of teachers teaching SPED

Subtheme D: Lack of Teachers

Respondent 1: Number of teachers (with SPED item)
21 pupils + 2 (not officially enrolled) = 23

Respondent 2:

Subtheme 3: Assessment

Respondent 1:

Respondent 2: No standard of assessment for SPED

Theme 2: Teaching Experiences

Respondent 1: Item: Special Education Teacher 1
(4 years teaching experience in SPED)

Respondent 2: Item: Teacher 1
(6 years teaching SPED)

Theme 3: Classroom Management

Subtheme A: Class Schedule

Respondent 1:

1. SPED classrooms are non – graded
2. Employed the 5 pupils per session strategy so that all 23 pupils will be focused on.

Subtheme B: Understanding the Learners

Respondent 1: Learn their wants, negotiate

Subtheme C: Containment of pupils

Respondent 1: Learn their wants, negotiate
-Learn how to control them (case to case basis)
-Separate the violent (I had an experience where one student (with bi-polar disorder had her tantrums so I separated her from the rest of the group, ignored her (of course mindful of her activities in the corner) until she just decided to come back and cooperate in class. I would know when the tantrums are gone because they would be sweet to me again.
-Contain the students. I also had one student who loves to go out of class, one time I followed her –

she just went farther. But when I decided to not follow her, she noticed I was not following, she went inside the classroom. Different children have different issues so there are different solution.
-Patience. No matter what.

Respondent 2: Sometimes, going down to their level helps me understand them.
-Catch their level
-Enter their world
-Redirect their attention back to you

-Acceptance of what they are and what they are capable of (all positives and negatives)

Theme 4: Resources

Respondent 1: This (Lupok Central Elementary School) is the only Special Education / Resource Classroom
-Classroom
-I have the IMs which the MOOE of the school bought but that was 3 years ago.
-The tables that I have in my classroom are extra tables from the kindergarten classes.
-The computer tables were constructed by the parents.
-The laptop is mine
-Most of the resources here are teacher –funded. I had to do this / have the initiative because if I don't then I will have nothing to aid me in teacher these pupils.
-The modules/worksheets were downloaded and printed by me. I requested the parents to softbound the books though (they agreed, as most of my pupils have been with me for 3 years)

Respondent 2: Support from RBI (Resources for the Blind, Inc.)
-Braille
-There is also an Embosser but (the system is not functional), it

was handed down by the previous SPED teacher (he is now teaching SPED in Chicago, USA)

-Teacher funded resources as well.

Theme 5: Stakeholders' Support / Support Groups

Respondent 1: Sometimes lack of support from community (bullying the pupils/discrimination), also lack of support from parents (like sending the pupils to therapy, follow-up on their learnings, home tutoring). Parents are also in denial of their children's condition.

Respondent 2: Support system (Multi-Disciplinary Teams (for example – psychologists and Psychiatrists) *Respondent 1 butting in; "yes, we have problems with teachers immediately diagnosing problematic students without consulting professionals such as the psychiatrists, they tend to easily pass to us this problematic students. The Grade 1 teachers have had their training in handling these kids. When I mainstream some kids, they always ask "diri it hiyamakatuyawdidahitonklase?" "Will s/he not be a burden if included in my class?"*

-Lacking support groups

-Lacking acceptance from society (bullying and discrimination)

Additional Notes:

ON THE PROGRAM IN QUESTION

1. The Special Education Program of Lupok Central School, known now as Resource Room was proposed back in 2009 and was implemented in 2010.
2. A resource classroom, as explained by the respondents is a preparation of a full-blown implementation of Inclusive Education, meaning that the SPED classes will be part of the regular class, the SPED class in LCES is one of these

resource rooms. There is a lack of budget now due to this transition.

3. The SPED class is sharing the MOOE budget with the rest of the school. Meaning, it is not enough. There was supposed to be a transition/continuous training of elementary teachers in preparation for this full-blown implementation of Inclusive Education, but so far, they have not felt the progress.

ON THE PROFILE OF ASSIGNED PUPILS:

RESPONDENT 1:

- A. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- B. Bipolar Disorder
- C. Down Syndrome
- D. Difficulty in Remembering and concentrating
- E. Speech difficulty
- F. Mobility difficulty
- G. Communication difficulty

RESPONDENT 2:

- A. Deaf
- B. Mute

ON THE GOALS, ADDITIONAL TASKS AND REWARDS

1. The teachers feel accomplished once they are able to
 - (1) mainstream their pupils (Respondent 1:1 (to Grade 1 in Lupok), Respondent 2: 2 (to Cogon)
 - (2) Learn the 3Rs
 - (3) Acquire Daily Skills / Self-Help skills/ Life skills (such as shoe lacing, buttoning, etc.)
2. The teachers also act as itinerant at times, homeschooling those who can't afford to go to school due to distance. (Respondent 2 had to go to Bungtod (a barangay belonging to the Guiuan East District) to teach 1 pupil and another (1) in Mercedes –another municipality.)

*These children are now called Learners with Special Education Needs

*There is a change in the name from Disability to Difficulty – to lessen or eradicate total discrimination from communities/other people.

*Phasing = Gradual removal of SPED Centers and changing it to Inclusive Education Schools.

*The DSWD is an active partner of the LCES SPED Program

Summary

The Lupok Central Elementary School Special Education Program is the only program offered not only in Guiuan, Eastern Samar but for a lot of its neighboring municipalities such as Mercedes, Salcedo, Quinapondan, Giporlos, Lawaan and MacArthur. Due to the distance, however, there are only a few pupils who are able to avail of this privilege. Even the locals of Guiuan cannot afford to study due to the distance, as some of them are very far from Lupok and others are even farther as they are residing on the islands of Sulu-an, Homonhon, Manicani, Victory and Tubabao. Implementing the Special Education Program is also hard to implement as even most parents are in denial of their child's real conditions as most of them are ashamed of this condition. Society also has a tendency to be hard on these individuals, with some bullying and discrimination cases. It is a good thing though that these bullying and discrimination acts are now lessened as more people are becoming aware and educated. The biggest problem however, as identified by the SPED teachers themselves are the lack of funding, and the poor follow up of the implementation or transition towards Inclusive Education.

With only 2 teachers teaching Special Education, not only do they have to deal with those who are coming into class but also act as itinerants, serving those who are not able to afford the cost of travelling (this is synonymous to home –schooling).

Conclusions

The results of the study concluded that, indeed there is really a lack of budget, and the poor monitoring of Inclusive Education. There is also a shortage of schools offering this kind of program, and shortage of teachers trained and willing to be trained to teach special education. There is also lack of (clinical) psychologists and psychiatrists who are to refer cases from regular to special and vice versa. Very few are enrolled in the program also because of the lack of acceptance, awareness and participation from parents who have children with special needs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were given based on the results of the study;

1. Improve the monitoring of Inclusive Education
2. Train more teachers who can accommodate learners with special needs.
3. Have more Resource Classrooms (what is now known as Special Education Program), at least 1 per District / or 3 for the entire municipality of Guiuan and build Resource Classrooms
4. Increase the budget for teaching Special Education (for the acquisition of equipment and other learning resources).
5. Intensify coordination with Local Government Units, Department of Social Welfare and Development to (1) promote awareness of the existence of the Resource Classrooms amongst all other members of society, (2) Eradicate discrimination and bullying of pupils with special needs.

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