

CHALLENGES OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PUBLIC SCHOOLS FACE

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Nowadays, regular classroom education is said to have faced challenges of learning gaps and learning losses, aggravated by the 2020 COVID pandemic when schools were compelled to shut down for health and safety reasons.

Such learning gaps and losses are considered one of the reasons why the Philippines has been performing poorly in international examinations. For example, in the Programme for International Assessment (PISA), the Philippines ranked 78 out of 78 in 2018 and 77 out of 81 in 2022.

Our educational system's appalling performance in the PISA can be an indicator that our public school system is facing alarming challenges in its content and delivery.

If regular schools with regular learners are experiencing challenges and issues, how much more complex would classroom situations be if learners with learning difficulties were integrated into regular classes as provided for in Republic Act No. 11650, also known as "An Act instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education, Establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers of Learners with Disabilities in All School Districts, Municipalities, and Cities, Providing for Standards, Appropriating Funds Therefor, and for Other Purposes."?

Muega (2016), in his article entitled, Inclusive Education in the Philippines: Through the Eyes of Teachers, Administrators, and Parents of Children with Special Needs, enumerated quite a few challenges that inclusive education faces in the

Philippines. These challenges are among the teachers, school administrators, and parents of learners with special needs (LSEN).

For one, most schools in the Philippines are not fully equipped with the appropriate facilities and equipment that will facilitate easier learning delivery for a regular class with a set of learners where LSEN's are included in the regular enrollment. Classroom furniture and learning materials may be appropriate for regular learners; how about for the LSEN's?

Another challenge is the capacity of regular teachers to teach LSEN's. Learners with learning difficulties may require specialized skills among teachers so they can conduct the teaching and learning process in such a way that would be understandable for everyone in the class. If teachers are lucky enough to be provided with the adequate and appropriate set of training, will they be physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to teach a crowd of regular and special learners together in the same class and schedule?

Still, another challenge is parental acceptance and willingness to allow their children to get mixed in a single class. Many parents with LSEN children have previously voiced apprehension about the prospect of regularly integrating their kids out of concern for potential bullying, miscommunication, and condemnation. In the same manner, many parents of regular learners also fear how discipline and control can be enforced knowing that there are LSEN's in their class. What happens to the class if and when a learner with special needs or learning difficulties experiences episodes of tantrums and emotional instability?

With all these challenges, it would be ideal for all the key players in the educational process – the school, the teachers, the parents, and the learners - to be more open-minded and accepting. Inclusive education promotes equality and equity to ensure that no child is left behind in the delivery of education. Every child deserves to learn in a child-friendly

and nurturing learning environment, and every child deserves to be nurtured despite disabilities and difficulties.

It would be best if more efforts were exerted as regards information dissemination and inclusivity advocacy because if everyone gets educated on inclusive education, the more supportive each one can be.

References:

Inclusive Education in the Philippines - upd journals online

Inclusive Education in the Philippines: Through the Eyes of Teachers, Administrators, and Parents of Children with Special Needs

Michael Arthus G. Muega

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Republic Act No. 11650

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