

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY IN BASIC EDUCATION

by:

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Education is one of the fundamental rights of every individual, and it is clearly protected by the constitution, which mandates the government to provide appropriate measures or actions to ensure that education is accessible to all.

Adhering to this mandate, the Department of Education is continuously taking appropriate steps for the promotion and advancement of inclusive education in basic education. The issuance of DepEd Order No. 44 s' 2021, or the Policy Guidelines on the Provision of Educational Programs and Services for Learners with Disabilities in the K-12 Basic Education Program, is one of the important steps of DepEd in realizing its mission to protect and promote the right of every Filipino to quality, equitable, culture-based, and complete basic education services.

With this policy implementation, it will serve as an assurance that there will be no barriers for the LWDs to hinder their access to and participation in the Basic Education Program of the country. However, it is important to note that inclusive education goes beyond putting our LWDs into mainstream or integrating them into the regular class.

In line with this implementation, the need to capacitate our teachers to handle inclusive classrooms should also be the focus of the agency since there is a need to invest in their professional development. The availability of well-trained teachers will definitely contribute to the successful implementation of the program since being equipped with varied activities, approaches, and strategies will surely be beneficial as we serve our learners.

Along with professional development, it is also of equal importance to focus on the availability of a safe and LWD-friendly environment. Ireri, Edno, Wangila, & Thuraniira's (2020) study indicated that inadequate school practices contributed to a lack of overcoming physical barriers, which hampered the adoption of inclusive education in schools. School transformation based on a strong inclusive education vision and philosophy, policies, and inclusive methods is required to overcome physical hurdles impeding inclusive education implementation.

The implementation of inclusive education is not just a program but instead a declaration that, regardless of any disabilities, everyone has the right to self-improvement and the development of their full potential. Bringing inclusivity into every classroom will also provide insight to all learners that education is for all.

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