

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES IN THE PHILIPPINES: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Inclusive education, which is defined as a strategy that ensures students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the same learning experiences as their peers who do not have impairments in general education classes (Sagun-Ongtangco et al., 2021), is an essential component of the educational system in the Philippines. As an example, Department Order No. 72, s.2009, which is titled "Inclusive Education as Strategy for Increasing Participation Rate of Children," has been implemented by the Department of Education. This order encompasses full inclusion, partial inclusion, and self-contained programs in Special Education (Department of Education, 2009). Additional programs and policies have also been implemented. In addition, the implementation of Republic Act 11650 emphasizes the commitment to inclusive education by setting standards, funding, and inclusive learning resource centers for students with disabilities (Philippine Government, 2022).

Shortages of trained teachers, decent classrooms, and even basic supplies continue to stall progress, despite the many reforms policymakers have announced. Economically vulnerable families feel this pinch the hardest. Allam and Martin (2021) argue that special-education programs must respond with proactive step-groups, strict rule-enforcement, and a sense of shared urgency. Their research makes it clear that good intentions alone rarely change a single classroom.

Serious mental-health funding is another piece of the puzzle if a truly inclusive system is to materialize. Toquero (2021a; 2021b; 2021c) recommends that counseling services in schools and clinics weave equity into the very fabric of their policies. Crafting such

programs tests institutional will, yet it also opens the door for meaningful improvement. Effective design lets educators adjust lessons on the fly while still safeguarding every students emotional and psychological well-being.

Abutazil (2023) insists that real progress in schools comes not from top-down edicts but from the ongoing back-and-forth of officials, principals, teachers, support staff, learners, and their families. Success, he argues, hinges on plans that are routinely checked, revised, and made to fit the shifting needs of everyone who has a stake in education. Even in the face of predictable setbacks, inclusive routines must be kept alive so young people emerge ready to help reshape their communities.

In the Philippines, educators, parents, and specialized personnel learn to operate as a team under the banner of inclusive education. Basister and Valenzuela (2021) observe that a classroom that welcomes students with disabilities demands daily lines of communication that do not fray between meetings.

The Philippine government has firmly vowed to principal its classrooms with the principle that no learner should be sidelined, regardless of physical or cognitive difference. Recent surveys and supervisory reports show that adjustments meant for children with disabilities have multiplied noticeably in ordinary public schools. Legislators will point to new funding formulas, testing exemptions, mobility aids, and daily coaching sessions for teachers as indicators of sincere momentum, however uneven it may still feel on the ground. Observers caution that sustaining this push may ultimately hinge on routine oversight rather than onetime budgets if a truly egalitarian system is to take root.

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