

Pedagogical Practices in Teaching Institution-Reared Children With Disabilities in the Philippines

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The Southeast Asian Conference on Education 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Children with disabilities (CWD), depending on the need and the circumstance, may be placed in different living conditions outside of the typical family set-up. For instance, the Philippine government mandates that child-caring agencies (CCAs) and institutions to take care of orphaned, abandoned, and neglected individuals. This involves the need to ensure that the children under their care are receiving and enjoying the same rights as typically developing children, including, education. To do so, they have adopted the use and employ of educational programs both within the institution, and outside of it. This study sought to determine the pedagogical practices used by these institutions, in light with inclusion and inclusive education principles that are in-trend today. Using qualitative method, the participants of the study were 6 teaching and non-teaching personnel from a public and private child-caring institutions in Metro Manila. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to gather the data, which were transcribed and analyzed thematically. The results show the stark differences between the competencies taught in regular schools and the targeted competencies within the institutions. Heavy focus were observed on teaching and training basic life skills and independent living. Furthermore, the practices also reflected the tendency to aim for social acceptance, indicating how the nature of pedagogy within these institutions are far from the aims of inclusion and inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Institution-Reared, Children With Disabilities, Special Education

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Introduction

For this study, it is important to encapsulate the population of people with disabilities. Globally, there is an estimated 3.3 million children with disabilities, amounting to 8% of the total population. (UNCRPD, 2008). In the Philippines, the number is estimated to be about 1.44 million, based on the 2010 Census of Population and Housing (TESDA, 2020). The most recent data states that there are at least 5.1 million Filipino children living with disabilities (UNICEF, 2018).

Institutionalization of the Disabled

Institutionalization, or the manner of implementing custodial care for people with disabilities in facilities, is well established in history. The response to disability had been varied, but institutionalization had been favored for years. For instance, between 1890 and 1905, the number of people in public institutions in the United States rose, from 250 to 500 persons per institution. The number of institutions also rose between 10 institutions in 1900, to 80 institutions in 1923.

In the Philippines, formal education was provided to the general public during the American occupation (1901 – 1945) (PQF, 2024). By 1902, Mr. Fred Atkinson expressed an interest to educate Filipino CWDs to the General Superintendent of Education (Inciong et al, 2007). Meanwhile, Special Education in the country can be traced to the establishing of the Insular School for the Deaf and Blind in Manila, in 1907 (Yap & Adorio, 2008). Through the years, several other institutions were established with the same intent in mind – to provide care and custody to children with disabilities in the country. Currently, there is a total of 197 residential care facilities for children, but the nature of child-care in these institution, that is, if they cater to people with disabilities, are unclear (DSWD, 1994).

Inclusion in the Philippines

Several mandates were established to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities. The Republic Act No. 7277 or *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* otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons is considered the hallmark legislation for this area, particularly with its provision towards access to quality education, special education, vocational/technical training, and non-formal education (RA 7277, 1992). Later acts and mandates reinforce the Magna Carta, and provides additional coverages for other essential benefits and privileges (NCDA, 2024).

The most recent of the long list of legislation is the Republic Act 11650, entitled *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*, otherwise known as the *Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act*. RA 11650 and the promise of inclusion. is the most recent culmination of all the mandates related to the education of people with disabilities in the Philippines. Through it, inclusive education is intended to be fully attained. (RA 11650, 2022). However, as of this writing, the law is yet to be implemented (Chi, 2023).

Interestingly, very little data is present regarding the state of institution-reared children with disabilities, especially in light of the newer mandates that call for inclusion and inclusive education. This study is undertaken to trace the status of the aforementioned demographics, and to see how inclusion and inclusive education is practiced in said institutions.

Methodology

The study utilized the qualitative approach, comparing data between a public and a private residential institution. Data was gathered primarily through structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. The following research questions were asked:

- What teaching practices exist within the residential institutions?
- What was the focus of the teaching and training process?
- How were these implemented/carried out?

The garnered data were likewise coded and analyzed, yielding the following results:

Scope of Teaching and Training Services

In terms of pedagogy, children with disabilities reared in institutions are exposed to several areas of learning that are also enjoyed by regular children, namely: *academics, extracurricular activities, and skills training*. However, it must be noted that the degree of implementation are clearly impacted by the disability type inherent of the student at hand.

Academics – the data shows that the responding institutions implement academic activities. However, these are prone to restructuring and other modifications considering the difficulty it may posit to several learners in the area. Several limitations observed include the scope of competencies, the depth of lessons, as well as focus areas. Children were taught, if able, to communicate using Filipino, with conversations ranging in expertise depending on a particular child. Activities that target traditional literacies (reading, writing, and mathematics) could be delivered under various settings, but are mostly taught at a functional level, e.g. children are brought to nearby commercial establishments and even local variety stores and taught to talk and purchase common items. The nature of the teaching process is anchored on need, rather than a prescribed set of competencies from the national curriculum.

Extra-Curricular Activities – Events like sports, celebrations, and even community integration, is conducted within the responding institutions. Children are encouraged to engage in physical activity in various forms, but are often relegated to sports activities. The respondents defined that activities under this banner are effective in reducing idleness, and inadvertently, the risk of misbehaviors and self-stimulatory behaviors from occurring. Children are likewise encouraged to pursue hobbies (drawing, singing, dancing, etc.) and other recreations under the same intention.

Skills Training – Several levels of Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), Basic Civic Training and Values Development are implemented and practiced. Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) are highly integrated into everyday activities. Children in both public and private institutions are exposed to skills training in pursuit of independent life. Those with greater skill and affinity for ADLs are moved up to Instrumental ADLs (household chores) and even advanced ADLs (hobbies) For Basic Civic Training, children are taught day-to-day mannerisms essential for social interactions, including how to show respect and observance of peaceful

communication strategies. Values development are likewise integrated in these activities, as was mentioned previously.

These three areas would be given differing levels of focus. Variables such as disability type, overall capability, retention, and even age are often considered during the implementation phase. Overall, the responding institutions had different practices as well, but are ultimately keen on enabling the children under their care to attain independence, eventually.

Nature of Pedagogical Practice

The institutions employ traditional teaching approaches. Most of the assigned educators utilize a perennialist-essentialist style, preferring lectures and demonstrations over student-centered approaches. Activities are taught through routine-based approaches, scaffolding the use of the law of effect and exercise to ensure retention and mastery of competencies.

As mentioned, the curricular content doesn't adhere to the National Standards. The teacher is often free to make accommodations and modifications to the scope of the competencies, as well as the sequence to take in teaching and delivering it to the student. It was observed, however, that the institutions focus on enabling participation in the implemented activities. On another note, students that are undertaking comparatively higher forms of training, such as attendance to external schools (external schooling program) and internships, are given more freedom to explore personal interests, and are no longer required to attend internal education services unless absolutely necessary. The same children are likewise provided with more responsibilities in the house. Lastly, the assessment types used (formative and summative) are utilized sparingly – teachers are likewise left to their best judgement as to whether conduct these assessments or not.

Conclusion

The garnered data shows how pedagogical practices are manifested in institutions that cater to children with disabilities. To some extent, the conduct of educational services are partly inclusive, especially since the institutions strive to provide educational support and activities to all children. The institutions have allowed normalization to occur to some degree, but again, it is still quite different from what is enjoyed by nondisabled children outside the institution. The pedagogical practices within the responding institutions for this study are aligned with the common practices within the field of special needs education. Some areas, however, are too far from the desired degree of inclusivity. For instance, hiring in-house teachers to deliver educational services and needs are in practice, but the degree of freedom accorded to the teachers in terms of educational decisions can posit risks towards the scope and depth of the taught curriculum. The differences in methods as well as the use of modifications can make the instructional technique rigid and exclusive, and efforts to individualize may make the lessons too disability-related.

In terms of strategies, the use of *traditional* techniques under teacher-centered approaches (perennialism, essentialism) is indeed necessary but is undoubtedly different from the current techniques used in the education field. For years, advocates of learner-centered strategies have lobbied for the use of student-centered techniques. From the outside, this violates that notion of inclusion, where “all means all”, and is arguably, one of the many loopholes of inclusive education.

This study, while quite short, paints a preliminary picture of how institutions been faring in terms of the call for inclusion and inclusive education. From the narratives laid out, it is recommended for the following to be done and observed:

1. Comply with newer mandates, especially in the pursuit and conduct of inclusive education. R.A. 11650, while still unimplemented, will be a critical factor towards the pursuit of inclusive education for all children with disabilities. Institutions that cater to children with disabilities may find itself facing difficulties if they fail to fully observe inclusion in its systems.
2. Recalibrate the institution's educational goals, factoring in eventual social integration. Heavy focus was observed towards the use of ADLs and similar activities, but with a lack in appropriate end-goals, these trainings will eventually fall out-of-order. Pursuing higher goals will make both the pedagogue and the student more abreast with the necessary degree of quality to look into.
3. Provide guidance and monitor the quality of educational service and delivery. Aligning the content, scope, breadth, and depth of the learning experiences provided in the institutions with what is currently implemented outside of it will help offer activities that are appropriately inclusive.
4. Open up the community to reduce "exclusivity".
5. Strife for democratic education – children weren't fully consulted as to what they would like to pursue, despite being capable of doing so. This could be an integral first step that the responding institutions could take towards inclusivity.

All in all, reviewing the relationship between inclusion and institution-reared children with disabilities is of timely importance. It is imperative that we observe the notion of "no child left behind" for literally all children, especially for those living in institutional care.

Acknowledgements

The researcher is grateful for the opportunity brought upon and made possible by the participating institutions in this study.

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