

School-Based Management: Promoting Special Education Programs in Local Schools

Ingrid R. Yap

*Kids World Integrated School,
Inc.
North Greenhills, San Juan City
Philippines*

Mercedes P. Adorio

*Fairfield School
Diliman, Quezon City
Philippines*

Abstract

This is a qualitative study of 11 schools and six school divisions selected to expand and organize Special Education-Inclusive Education Program in the Third Elementary Education Program (TEEP) of the Department of Education in the Philippines. School-based management (SBM) became the integrating framework of TEEP three years into the project. The study investigated how the local schools in selected pilot areas have used SBM to address the issues on (1) access to formal school, (2) quality of educational experiences, and (3) stakeholders' participation in school activities that are relevant to the interests of children with special needs. Results show that most schools gauge access by the number of identified students with special needs. Quality is linked to the availability of SPED teachers and resources. Participation is associated with parents' involvement in their special child's individualized education plan.

Keywords: special education, inclusive education, school-based management, school principal empowerment, stakeholder participation

The Philippine government in its continuing effort to improve the quality of education in the country launched the Third Elementary Education Program (TEEP) in 1997. This nine year project was aimed at improving the quality of primary education by means of decentralizing governance at the elementary school level (Department of Education, 2006b). The passage of Republic Act 9155 in 2001 provided the Department of Education (DepEd) the legal mandate to reorganize governance in basic education. With such directive, school-based management (SBM) became the framework for making institutional changes to improve elementary school students' learning (DepEd, 2006d). The school divisions selected for TEEP are located in the poorest provinces in the country. The mean scores of the students in these divisions were among the lowest in the National Achievement Tests. The DepEd selected the schools with the assumption that if school reform could be successfully launched in the marginalized sectors of the country, then it will be as effective when adopted in the urban

areas (DepEd, 2006b).

The Philippines, as a signatory of the Salamanca Statement of Action on Special Needs Education, recognizes the principle of equal educational opportunities for “all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions” (Salamanca Statement, 1994). This framework was adopted in the Philippines through the Department of Education Culture and Sports (now DepEd) Order no. 26 which institutionalized inclusive education. The order required the organization of at least one SPED center in each division and implementation of SPED programs in all school districts where there are students with special needs.

Special education started in the Philippines in 1907 with the establishment of the Insular School for the Deaf and Blind. The school started with 92 deaf persons and one blind person. Today, DepEd serves 11 types of children with special needs in public schools. As of schoolyear 2006-2007, there were 162,858 students with special needs at the elementary level, 51% or 83,231 of whom are in the gifted program. The remaining 49 % were students with various disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, learning disability, mental retardation, behavior problem, autism, and cerebral palsy. Students with learning disabilities comprise 25% of students with special needs. However, up to this date, many children with learning disabilities, mental retardation, and autism remain unidentified in public schools (DepEd, 2006a). The inclusion of children under these three categories of special cases were among the major concerns of the TEEP-SBM-Inclusive Education (IE) project.

National policies notwithstanding, programs and services for children with special needs are concentrated in the urban areas (Camara, 2003). Therefore, the TEEP schools were a practical logical choice to pilot inclusive education as these schools are located in remote and very poor provinces of the Philippines.

School-based management

SBM is concerned with the decentralization of decision-making authority from the central, regional, and division offices to the individual schools. The idea is to unite the school heads, teachers, students, local government units, and the community to improve the quality of early formal education in Philippine public schools (DepEd, 2006b). The DepEd has decentralized decision-making powers to local officials as its response to RA 7160 (the Philippine Local Government Code) in 1999. DECS Order 230, defined decentralization as:

- (a) Promotion of school based management, (b) transfer of authority and decision-making powers from the central office to the divisions and schools, (c) sharing of responsibility of educational management of local schools with the local governments, parents, the community and other stakeholders, and (d) the devolution of education functions (DepEd, 2006b).

The premise of SBM is that principals, teachers, parents, and the local communities are

in the best position to know the needs of their schools and to make appropriate decisions in a timely manner. So “involving local stakeholders in addressing local problems is the key to improving schools and even to mobilizing much-needed resources” (World Bank, 2004).

Three years into the implementation of SBM, DepEd included Special Education-Inclusive Education (SPED-IE) among the TEEP schools. The timing is auspicious as improving our special education programs should go hand in hand with national initiatives to improve educational outcomes (UNESCO, 2005). Inclusive education programs are closely linked to providing quality programs for all students. Improving educational programs should be seen not in terms of ‘defective students’ but in how educators can improve school programs and practices to meet the needs of all students (Porter, 1997).

The overlapping spheres in Figure 1 show the stages of implementation, maintenance, and enrichment of the TEEP-SBM-IE Projects in the context of DepEd reform programs.

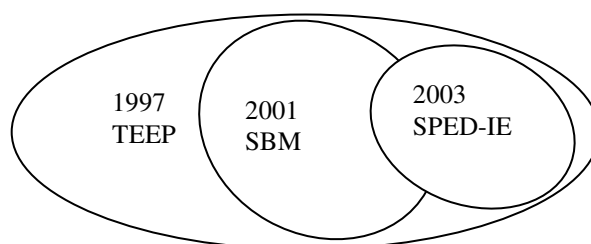


Figure 1. TEEP-SBM-IE time spheres (1997-2006)

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to assess how the local schools in the identified TEEP schools addressed the issues on (a) access, (b) participation, and (c) quality in relation to children with special needs. The study also determined how stakeholders (school principals, teachers, and parents, local governments) evaluated their programs to include students with special needs and how they saw their schools as they addressed the needs of all students.

Special education (SPED) as used in this study meant school programs for students “who are failing in school for a wide variety of reasons” (ISCE, 1997) and not limited to those with handicapping conditions or with disabilities, or those served only in special schools or institutions and SPED centers. Inclusive education (IE) as used in this study was based on the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Inclusive education was also used as “the process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 2004). In this study SPED-IE was used as a program, placement, and process.

Conceptual framework

School-based management calls for a system change not only in the way schools are organized, but also in the attitudes of school heads, teachers, students, and the community toward shared governance. For example, the belief that all children can learn, that learning supported by a strong sense of community, can lead to improved student learning outcomes. In a similar manner inclusive education calls for a new way of organizing the school, so student learning is achieved. Schools are not only seen as seats of learning, but also as places of changing attitudes, creating equality and opportunity for participation in society. With teachers adjusting their teaching styles and providing curricular adaptations and modifications, student achievement is expected to improve for all students. Unfortunately, in many countries including the Philippines, students from rural areas usually get the short end of delivery of educational services. Studies have shown the “deleterious effects of inadequate or inappropriate education” in rural areas (Kochba & Gopal, 1998). Rogoff’s (1995) socio-cultural theory “proposed a view of learning and development as a dynamic process of transformation of participation in a given community of practice.” His theory directs research to answer questions such as, “What are the activities in which people participate? Why and with whom and with what? How does the activity, its purpose, and people’s roles in it transform?” (Rogoff, 1995).

The concept of SBM and shared decision-making fall under the umbrella of participative management. It has become an accepted belief that when people participate in decisions affecting them, they are more likely to have a sense of ownership and commitment to the decisions and situations that involve them (Glickman, 1993). SBM supports the use of contextual appraisal practices and participatory research. Figure 2 illustrates how SBM dimensions of practice can promote and sustain SPED-IE, through school leadership, a shared belief system with stakeholders, and school performance accountability process.

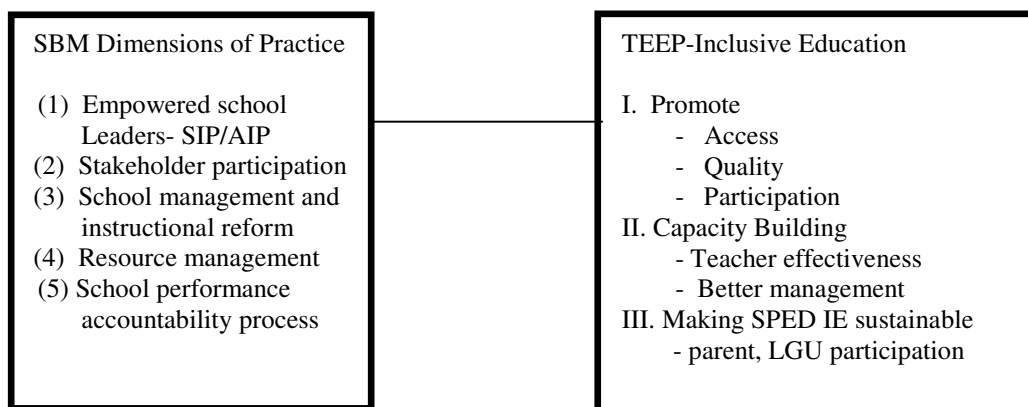


Figure 2. Link of school-based management and inclusive education

Empowered school leadership

Principals are the key figures in facilitating change in a school (DuFour & Berkey, 1995). DuFour and Berkey also cited studies done by Boyer (1983), Lieberman & Miller (1981), Levine & Lozotte (1990) and Smith & Andrews (1990) on the role of principals on promoting meaningful changes in the school. In SBM, it is the school principal who is given the responsibility to lead the process of shared governance. School heads take on the new role of school managers aside from being instructional leaders. School heads have to set the climate for teaching and learning through participatory planning and governance in the school, developing teamwork, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and networking among the parents, the local government, non-government organizations, and the community.

Stakeholder participation

School heads, together with the teachers, the barangay captains, and other stakeholders were trained by the TEEP-SBM project staff to do an environmental scanning to determine school needs and problems. Armed with a shared mission and vision of their schools, a School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Annual Improvement Plan (AIP) were formulated. The SIP and AIP included targets to increase student enrollment, staff development, physical plant development, resource generation and fund management.

In developing countries, the support of the local community including the parents, the local government units, and the local industry, is an important element in sustaining and maintaining the viability of improved learning outcomes. In El Salvador, the success of the Educo program is attributed to parental participation (Jimenez & Sawada, 1999). In the Compensatory Education Program in Mexico, empowered parent associations have substantial effect on attendance in school, home follow-up studies, and motivation (Gertler, Patrinos & Rubio-Bodina, 2006). In the Philippines, there is a problem of parents and professionals having different expectations of special education programs as the former remains a largely untapped source of educational assistance (Gaw, 2000; Dela Torre, 1995; Rotor, 1998; Sandoval, 2001; Sarillo, 1993; Singayan, 1987; Villanueva, 1993).

School management and instructional reform

The greatest accountability of school heads is to improve learning outcomes in their schools. Rule VI, section 6.2 of RA 9155 states that school heads have to be accountable for higher learning outcomes by setting the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the school; creating an environment that is caring and welcoming for all students, and where teaching and learning will thrive; the implementing and monitoring of curriculum at the same time offering educational programs and services that will benefit all students.

Inclusive education (IE) is a process of school change. The goal of IE is for the community and the schools to work together to provide access to quality education for all students, including those with special needs. Findings of the Center for Policy Options in Special Education show that in schools and school districts where there is an explicit and upfront acknowledgement of students with disabilities in the mission statement, a wholistic

program for students with exceptional needs are provided. The schools address not only their academic needs, but also their emotional, social, and health needs (McLaughlin, 1993).

Resource management and accountability

Time and money are essential resources in any educational reform. The management of these resources is a skill the school heads have to learn and do. During the TEEP project implementation, the school heads were given SBM funds to build infrastructure and procure furniture appropriate to their needs. School heads were further encouraged to find local sources for materials and infrastructure needs through collaborative consensus with the Parent Teacher Council Association (PTCA), the local government units (LGU's), non government organizations (NGO's), and alumni (DepEd, 2006b).

At the end of the year, the results of school improvement plans and annual improvement plans must be contained in the school report card to be reported to all the parents, teachers, and local government officials. The format of the school report cards includes the objectives of the annual improvement plan, the specific projects for the year, the achievement of students based on division and national examinations, number of enrollees per grade level, the cohort, and survival data of students. The idea is to keep the parents informed of what is going on in the school and get them involved to make the school a better learning place. The lack of accountability, communication, and information on what to expect from special education programs has led to expectations that are either too high or too low among stakeholders. Sandoval's (2001) study on the reasons why parents pull out their children from schools cited lack of future progress of their child in schools, in addition to the teachers being poorly trained to teach students with special needs.

According to UNESCO (2004), everyone who wishes to be schooled and educated should be entitled to enjoy the following: (1) equal access to opportunities for basic learning with peers, (2) equality in terms of good quality experiences that will allow them to complete basic education, and (3) equality in the assurance that their education will provide them with the skills to become useful and contributing members of the community. The TEEP-SBM project was designed as a catalyst for school reform (DepEd, 2006d).

Special education is one of the three development areas of the TEEP Project. The other two are the Multigrade Programs (MG) and the Curriculum for the Culture of Indigenous People (CCIP). From the 23 school divisions, nine divisions were selected for the TEEP Inclusive Education Program. The project was aimed at the reactivation, expansion, and opening of new SPED programs (DepEd, 2006a).

Research methodology

This research used a 3-level method of qualitative research to generate data for the study. First a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted with principals. The second level involved the development of an item pool from the FGD transcript for the questionnaires. At the third level, interviews were conducted with stakeholders in the SPED-IE project, and

documents and records analyzed. A school visitation was made with selected schools and a case study was prepared.

Research participants and sampling

Purposive sampling was done in this study. The respondents for the questionnaires were 12 teachers, seven school principals, and four division supervisors. Respondents for the interview and FGD were 11 teachers, 11 principals, and three supervisors. An on-site visitation was made to two schools in one division. One of these schools was used in the case study.

Research locale

The nine divisions where the TEEP-SBM-IE was implemented is the research locale. Data were gathered from the Divisions of Abra, Aurora, Batanes, Benguet, and Mountain Province in Luzon, the Division of Leyte in the Visayas, and the Divisions of Cotabato and Surigao del Sur in Mindanao. The site of the FGD was the Division of Aurora, while the case study site was the Division of Benguet.

Research measurements and tools

Multiple measurement tools were used for the study: focus group discussion (FGD), questionnaires, interviews, and observations through site visitation. The FGD first centered on SBM practices in their local school. The second emphasis was on their school improvement plans, i.e., what provisions they have made to improve learning outcomes of students.

Three sets of questionnaires were developed after the FGD. One set for the principals sought to find out how inclusive education was implemented in their school. The second questionnaire for the teachers sought to determine inclusive practices in their school in terms of access, quality, and participation. The questionnaire also wanted to find out from the teachers strategies they used in the classroom to improve learning outcomes. Finally the questionnaire sought to describe their attitudes towards students with special needs before and after their training. The third questionnaire, developed for the division office, was to determine if their roles changed due to SBM and to identify the forms of assistance they offered to schools with SPED programs. The interviews provided more insight into SPED-IE practices, including personal experiences that were not covered in the questionnaire.

Results

All the principals acknowledged the poor economic conditions of the students in their schools resulting in absenteeism, drop-outs, and poor academic performance. The large class size, lack of materials, and lack of parental follow-up were also identified as causes of poor learning outcomes. Table 1 shows how the principals addressed felt needs in their schools.

Table 1
Problems identified and action taken by FGD participants

Principal	Identified problem	Action Taken
A	1. Non readers	1. Hired para- teachers to handle extra classes to teach reading.
B	1. Malnourished children due to poverty 2. Presence of non-readers and non numerates 3. Lack of teachers	1. Initiated feeding program. 2. Sought assistance from parents to follow up their children on school attendance and homework. 3. Hired new teacher to assist teacher-in charge.
C	1. Poor health of students affecting their school performance 2. Lack of audio visual materials	1. Identified ten poorest children-provided them with feeding program and tutorials. 2. Implemented the Education Beneficiaries Program for all the students. ..We put up a viewing room where all the students ...watch episode of lessons in science, English, and mathematics, also in social studies and values education.
D	1. Malnutrition resulting in absenteeism. 2. Non readers	1. Granted Php37,000 for the breakfast feeding program for five months.(daily) Attendance improved and also the achievement. 2. Remedial program for non readers during lunch break and after school. Hired Para- educators to assist, -purchase the reading materials.
E	1. Non readers	1. Granted Php60, 000.00 for remedial reading project. Hired para-educators, bought extra reading materials, and ABS-CBN educational tapes.
F	1. Non readers	1. Hired para-teachers to conduct remedial reading classes for the non readers in grades 1 and 2. Scheduled reading program between 11 to 12 and 4:00 to 5 pm. - Bought supplementary reading materials.

In line with TEEP objectives non-readers and non-numerates received the initial interventions. Aside from academic remediation, four principals embarked on feeding programs to attract the children to school, or to make them stay in the school the whole day with at least “food in their stomach”. Together with the feeding program, the principals hired para-educators to provide assistance or extra time for the non-readers and non-numerates in small groups. The schools then enlisted the support of the parents to make sure their children went to school and followed-up their children at home. This relationship was established during meetings with stakeholders and parent-teacher dialogues during homeroom meetings.

Ten principals responded to the questionnaires on access, quality, and participation as implemented in their schools. Table 2 shows the indicators used to guide them.

Table 2
School indicators on access, quality, and participation

<i>Access</i>
Identification of students who may need SPED services at the beginning of the year.
Identification of students who may need special services at anytime of the school year
Recruitment of new students from the community
Parents of SPED students are made to feel welcome in school
Lack of trained teachers in SPED-IE
<i>Quality</i>
Implementation of functional and differentiated curriculum for SPED students
Allocation of SPED resource room
Supervision of SPED program
Item and budget for SPED Teacher
Number of SPED students taking NAT/DAT exams
Sourcing and allocation of funds for SPED Program
<i>Participation</i>
Advocacy for IE among stakeholders

Access. For 60% of school heads, the issue of access is related to the size of enrollment of students with special needs. School heads also believed that access is related to the identification of students with special needs and availability of required assistance to enable them to cope with the demands of regular schooling. All principals were aware of the “zero reject” policy of the government. Therefore, the schools could not reject any student who wants to enroll in their school.

One principal considered students with special needs a challenge for the teachers to teach. In a class of 45 to 50 students, it was very hard for one teacher to attend to one or two students with behavioral or learning needs. At certain periods of the day, these students were sent to a resource room or attend classes in the SPED center. According to her, “We are encouraging other children from other schools to come to our school since we have a SPED program. Right now we have four fulltime SPED teachers. We have 40 students with special needs in the SPED Center”.

Other FGD principals who did not have SPED programs said they referred students with special needs to the SPED Center. For students who could not afford to spend for the added cost of transportation, they had no choice but to keep them in their schools. These students eventually dropped out of school. One principal did house-to-house campaign to recruit students with special needs when she started the SPED-IE program in her school. Another principal enlisted the help of the governor to create awareness among the LGUs of her SPED program. The local government helped recruit new students to her school.

Quality. Quality of learning is closely linked with the resources of the school and the competence of teachers. Among the agreements reached with the school heads at the start of the SPED-IE program were the provision of resource rooms, creation of multi-disciplinary teams, training of understudies and change of teacher item for those handling students with

special needs from regular teacher to SPED teacher. Two principals provided resource rooms, one was still soliciting funding support for the resource room, while one principal allowed the use of whatever room was available especially during lunch breaks or after school.

According to one principal, the creation of a multidisciplinary team is an ideal that is difficult to implement. Teachers were very busy with their teaching loads to formally discuss student needs. Another problem was the dual roles performed by SPED teachers as regular and SPED teacher. This leaves the SPED teacher too exhausted to do better planning, to collaborate with the other teachers, and to reflect on the effectiveness of instruction.

In answer to the question on how the schools provided resources for special education programs, the participants indicated that this was a major problem. For some it was a challenge to find the resources to maintain their special education programs. For most new principals, the special education program could wait until the needs of the regular programs were met. Some principals committed to SPED-IE approached NGOs, alumni, and personal friends to provide books, materials, and school furniture. Others wrote foreign governments for donations, while others approached government agencies for specific projects such as building construction.

Participation. For 60% of the school heads, participation was addressed in terms of having parents involved in the special education programs of their child, which included coming to school when the SPED teachers needed to discuss with them their child's IEP. Some parents who had other children to care for made it their reason not to come to school, while others exerted extra effort or walked several kilometers to help in school activities ..

Advocacy in getting stakeholders involved in the school program for students with special needs is a hard task for principals especially when they have not received training in special education management. Due to lack of information or lack of training many principals and regular teachers do not favor having students with special needs in their school. On the other hand, parents of children with special needs who have kept children with special needs at home will not come out overnight and bring their child to school. Many families still consider having a special child "shameful". Two principals included SPED- IE in their AIP so parents became aware of the SPED program. They also discussed the needs of their SPED programs in their parent council meetings, formed linkages with LGUs for funding support, promoted collegiality among their staff, and offered willingness to share knowledge with neighboring schools.

Capacity building

To build the capability of the schools to implement SPED-IE, 27 teachers were selected for training. By the time the study was conducted, a little over 50% were active SPED teachers in the same school. Those who were active SPED teachers, rated their school SPED-IE programs from good to outstanding. There were also SPED teachers who carried on their work in spite of problems such as isolation, poor support from their school heads or school heads without any knowledge of SPED-IE, and parents who had negative attitudes about SPED.

These teachers also reported high turnover of school principals during the implementation of SPED-IE in their schools. In some schools the turnover rate was as much as one new principal every school year.

The teachers in the study were asked to write what they thought of SPED-IE before and after their training. All their responses were negative before their training. Negative attitudes due to lack of information and training towards students with special education needs (SEN) were also shown in research here and abroad (Almario, 1984; Lontoc, 1997; Padilla, 2002; Praiser, 2005; Tsang, 2004). After having worked with students with special needs for at least three years, they realized that this is the work they want to do. The teacher testimonies are found in Table 3.

Table 3
Teacher response on being a SPED teacher

Teacher	What does being a SPED teacher mean to you?
T8	<i>Giving one's time, talents and effort to children with special needs. It also means going beyond normal tasks of a teacher since you should address their need not only academic but also the personal aspect of the pupils. I'm referring to those with disabilities. As for those gifted, additional activities should be given for enrichment. For both types of pupils/children, the SPED teacher must endeavor to help them develop their full potential.</i>
T4	<i>To be a special education teacher means to be a psychologist- you should be able to adjust to the different behaviors of each pupil. To be a very understanding teacher – you should understand their words (pupils could utter words which are not good to your ears) You should have patience too so that you can still go back to the classroom tomorrow to face another challenge.</i>
T1	<i>Support students with special needs. Develop students' IEP Use teaching strategies and skills development activities to meet the students' needs.</i>
T7	<i>Special education teacher is patient, kind, and understanding. Should possess all the characteristics traits and have loved to teach these children. Ready to serve the children without expecting any return. Must be workaholic and resourceful. Special Ed teacher means being versatile.</i>
T5	<i>A SPED teacher is a teacher who shows interests, sacrifices to support pupils/learners with special needs. He/She looks for appropriate materials/proper teaching strategies and other activities to meet the needs of the learners. Assists the regular teacher in providing materials to advance the learner's training and education.</i>
T6	<i>Being a SPED teacher is not simply a profession to embrace but more of a mission and a vocation. It entails a lot of loving, sacrificing, understanding and learning. Helping a special child achieve his/her milestones, no matter how small, is not only very rewarding but more of soul-gratifying. I'm blessed to have been given this opportunity to serve as a SPED teacher but I feel that I am not adequate to be called one.</i>
T3	<i>Being a SPED teacher means teaching with your heart. You may master principles, philosophies, methods and strategies of teaching. You may be an outstanding teacher but if you do not have the love for these children, you will only be frustrated. For me, this is the true essence of teaching, transforming what seems to be useless into useful citizens.</i>
T10	<i>SPED teacher is a teacher with a wider patience in handling special children.</i>

The teachers cited giving of one's self, patience, understanding, kindness, and dedication as traits special education teachers should have. One cited teaching as a vocation. Another cited working with other teachers in order to achieve the full potential of a child. These testimonies are a direct result of their training and experience in the field.

The teachers in the study were asked what strategies they have employed to make their

students learn. Common strategies mentioned by the teachers were: making their students recipients of the school feeding programs, games, storytelling, cooperative learning, buddy system, hands on activities, using different activities, brainstorming, discussion, simulations, and modelling.

The strategies mentioned are the same or similar to instructional strategies mentioned in research as effective practices for students with special needs (McLaughlin, 1993). It is noteworthy to highlight feeding among the strategies. Poverty among the students and the inability to have enough food is a common cause of absenteeism. To motivate the students to come to school, feeding was combined with remediation. Most teachers engaged students in one-on-one teaching. One teacher said “if my student can read and spell one word a day that is my happiness.”

A 39-item survey questionnaire was administered to the teachers to assess their perception on access, quality, and participation for students with special needs in their school. The indicators were developed from FGD results, interviews and research studies on inclusive education. The questions were randomized and presented in a five-point rating scale. The teachers were asked to evaluate their school SPED-IE using the indicators whether the statement as practiced was very true, sometimes true, somewhat untrue, not true, or no idea about the statement. After the responses were received and tabulated, the indicators were again regrouped according to three categories: access (13items), quality (15items), and participation (11items). Generally, the teachers were homogenous in their responses to the indicators as shown by the small standard deviations relative to their respective means. (See Tables 5, 6, 7). Table 5 shows the statistical results of their responses on access indicators.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics on access indicators

Indicator	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
A1 Parents of children with special needs can enroll at anytime of the school year	3.67	1.30	11
A2 The school announces over the radio and other media the opening of SPED classes or enrollment	3.54	1.61	12
A3 Parents are regularly given report of their children's progress (graded or nongraded)	4.92	0.28	1
A4 SPED students are included in all school activities	4.31	0.75	9
A5 SPED Programs have specific targets for the type of disabilities for admission	4.62	0.51	4
A6 Students who fail in national and division examinations are candidates for SPED	2.92	1.24	13
A7 SPED teachers are accountable to parents of SEN regarding the students' performance	4.31	0.95	8
A8 SPED students may be transferred to the regular classrooms at anytime when they are ready during the school year	4.54	0.97	5
A9 Students targeted for inclusion are given trial period to determine academic and social readiness	4.69	0.48	2.5

A10	There is adequate resources for determining learning academic strengths of students with special needs	4.15	0.69	10
A11	The SPED program services students of varying age and disabilities	4.69	0.48	2.5
A12	The SPED program is a component of the school's SIP/AIP/ and annual report card	4.42	0.67	7
A13	The SPED program follows the timeline targeted for the school year	4.46	0.78	6
Average		4.26	0.47	

Note. Scale: 1-5; N=13

Generally, the teacher-respondents gave high scores to the access indicators with a mean score of 4.26 except for indicator A6 where the score appears to be in the middle of the five-point scale. The three highest ranked indicators appear to be A3 (rank = 1), A9 (2.5), and A11 (2.5) in that order. On the other hand, the three lowest ranked indicators appear to be: A6 (13), A2 (12), and A1 (11) in ascending rank order.

The teachers considered giving parents regular reports of student performance a high priority. For most public school teachers, students identified having special needs were already in school. This could explain why the next items perceived as very true were: *SPED program services students of varying age and disabilities* and *students targeted for inclusion are given trial period to determine their academic and social readiness*. The lowest ranked indicators are actually a good sign. Failure in the division or national achievement test should not be the main reason for the child to be considered a SPED candidate.

Using media and other public means to announce special education programs were mentioned in the FGD and was thus included among the indicators, but apparently these were not done. SPED students enrolling at anytime during the school year also received an “untrue” rating because in the public schools, students could only enroll at the beginning of the school year. It was only the SPED Centers who received students for enrollment anytime during the school year.

Quality determined how well special education was delivered in the schools. Teachers said that they had knowledge in differentiating instructional programs and were competent in making IEPs. Discussing yearend targets with the parents were congruent with providing progress reports to parents. Considered sometimes true was the indicator of *principal supervision of SPED programs*. Principals who had no knowledge of SPED delegated the work of screening, identification, and program implementation to the SPED teachers. In these schools, SPED teachers were hardly supervised.

Rated not true at all was the role of SPED teachers. Majority of the teacher scholars except in some SPED Centers, were still performing the dual role of being a regular and SPED teacher. Availability of assessment tools was not consistent across all the schools. The school head and the community ensuring the sustainability of SPED programs received a mixed rating among the respondents. Some SPED teachers noted the turnover of schoolheads in their

school leaving them with very little administrative support. This administrative problem had affected the continuity of their SPED program. In schools where school heads were supportive of SPED-IE, teachers rated the indicator high. Table 6 shows the teachers' response on quality indicators.

Table 6
Descriptive statistics on quality indicators

Indicator	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Q1 SPED students take the Division and National Achievement Tests together with the school population.			
Q2 SPED teachers are competent in screening, identifying students with exceptional needs (SEN).	4.31	0.75	6
Q3 SPED teachers have knowledge in differentiating instructional programs.	4.69	0.48	1.5
Q4 SPED instructional effectiveness is well-defined.	4.23	0.83	9
Q5 Student year end targets are well discussed with parents.	4.62	0.65	3.5
Q6 Appropriate assessment tools are available.	4.08	0.95	11.5
Q7 SPED classes are supervised regularly by the school head.	4.62	0.77	3.5
Q8 The public is aware of SPED programs in the school.	4.31	0.95	6
Q9 The resource rooms are provided with materials to improve student learning.	4.31	0.95	6
Q10 SPED teachers are competent in developing IEPs for each child.	4.69	0.48	1.5
Q11 The school division insures the sustainability of SPED programs.	4.15	1.07	10
Q12 The school head and the community insure the sustainability of SPED programs.	4.08	0.95	11.5
Q13 SPED teachers no longer carry dual assignments; regular and SPED teachers.	3.23	1.24	14
Q14 Stakeholders provide support to SPED programs.	3.85	1.14	13
Q15 SPED teachers make decisions regarding student placements.	4.38	0.87	5
Average	4.25	0.50	

Note. Scale: 1-5; N=13

Generally, the teacher-respondents rated the quality indicators high. Overall, the teachers' ratings on quality indicators has a mean score of 4.25. The first four highest ranked indicators appear to be Q3 (rank = 1.5), Q10 (1.5), and Q5 (3.5), and Q7 (3.5) and the four lowest ranked indicators appear to be Q13 (14), Q14 (13), Q6 (11.5), and Q12 (11.5). There was no rating for Q1 because there was no data available.

The questions on participation sought to determine the extent of involvement of parents, other teachers, students, the LGU in the SPED Program. Parent involvement in the progress of their child was rated very high, and was congruent with the top rated indicators of access and quality. While some parents had negative feelings about having their child placed in the SPED program, they became more involved once they saw the benefits. Strong collaboration among

regular and SPED teachers was the second highest indicator. As former regular teachers, the newly trained SPED teachers were more accepting of the concept of sharing information and collaboration with regular teachers to improve the learning outcomes of students.

Being aware of the instructional demands of regular students was not a new thing among the respondents because many of them also carried regular teaching loads. However, the reverse was not true; many regular teachers were not knowledgeable of SPED programs. The low rating of collegiality among SPED and regular teachers requires further investigation. Table 7 summarizes the descriptive statistics on teacher response on participation indicators.

Table 7
Descriptive statistics on performance indicators

Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
P1 Parents are involved in making decisions about the progress of their SPED child.	4.69	0.85	1
P2 Other school personnel are involved in the assessment of the SEN.	3.69	0.95	10
P3 The Local Government Unit (barangay, town mayor, etc.) are involved in referring and or identifying students with exceptional needs in the community.	3.77	1.24	9
P4 The SPED Program is separate from the regular education curriculum.	3.85	0.90	8
P5 The curriculum for SPED is different from that of regular students.	4.46	0.66	4
P6 It is the function of the SPED teacher to develop another teacher as understudy.	4.08	1.04	6.5
P7 There is a strong collaboration between regular and SPED teacher.	4.62	0.65	2.5
P8 SPED teachers aware of the instructional demands in the regular classrooms.	4.62	0.65	2.5
P9 There is strong collegiality between regular and SPED teachers.	4.15	0.90	5
P10 The regular teachers are knowledgeable of SPED Programs.	3.15	1.14	11
P11 SPED students targeted for inclusion in the regular classroom are provided with transition plan.	4.08	1.00	6.5
Average	4.11	0.62	

Note. Scale:1-5; N=13

Generally, the teacher-respondents gave a high score to the participation indicators. Overall, the teachers' ratings on participation has a mean score of 4.11. The three highest ranked indicators appear to be P1 (rank = 1), P7 (2.5), and P8 (2.5) and the three lowest ranked indicators appear to be P10 (11), P2 (10), and P3 (9).

Role of division office towards SPED-inclusive education

School-based management brought with it structural and role changes in the way schools are managed. In answer to the question on how the SPED-IE programs are supported by the division office and how their roles and support changed due to SBM, all respondents acknowledged the contribution of the TEEP-IE project. SBM funds allowed the divisions to support training of school heads and teachers in IE. Yet, there were divisions where no training on IE was conducted.

Only two of the divisions in the study had consistently conducted training in IE for principals and teachers. One division sent at least 20 teachers every school year since 2004 for training in SPED. One division supervisor on the other hand, developed a monitoring and evaluation instrument to guide SPED programs in her area.

Stakeholder evaluation of their SPED-IE Program

The study also determined how stakeholders (school principals, teachers, and parents) evaluated their programs to include students with special needs and what quality indicators the schools used.

Individualized education plan (IEP). The IEP is the hallmark of special education. It contains the current skills of the student, goals for the year and specific instructional objectives for the year. The IEP is ideally prepared with input from a multidisciplinary team composed of the SPED teacher, the guidance counselor, the regular teacher, the parents, the student (for older children) and other specialists providing services for the child. However, in the research locale, this team had hardly been formed. Therefore, the task of preparing IEPs for each SPED student was done by the SPED teachers. Sixty percent of school heads considered the attainment of the IEP goals and objectives an appropriate gauge of the success of their SPED program. Thus special education is considered effective when a student attained the goals and objectives as specified in the IEP. Conceptually, the IEP as the measure of effectiveness of special education is considered sound. "Effective special education would be what produces results for the student, as measured by whether or not the student has achieved or made progress toward his or her own individualized goals and objectives as well as broader system goals or outcomes" (McLaughlin,1993).

Another way schools measured SPED program effectiveness was parent satisfaction of the progress of their child. A mother of 12 year old twins with disability expressed her satisfaction with the SPED program in her school with these words:

...as they grow up and go to school, I feel proud of them because even if they are like that, they can do many things and that's because they are attending this school. Sometimes, they can do more than what my normal children can.

A very satisfied mother whose son started in a special class and was fully mainstreamed in a secondary school wrote:

I am very lucky that BSC has a special education center to cater to the needs

of my child. Before he had tantrums... now he socializes with people. Before he doesn't like to be in a crowd. In the six years of stay at BSC he has improved in his academics as well as in his behavior. He was mainstreamed to a regular school after six years. During his first year, he was partially mainstreamed at BES. On the 2nd year, he was fully mainstreamed. He graduated at BES and now he is a second year high school student in a private school.

The DepEd objective of increasing enrollment of SPED students in the TEEP schools has generally been realized. The teachers reported 453 students identified with learning disability, mental retardation, and developmental delay from 2003 to 2007 among students enrolled in their respective schools. Another 115 new students with special needs were recruited and enrolled in their SPED programs. These students were then provided with IEPs. Educational services depended on what the school could provide, i.e. pull out system, special class, or after school remediation.

School heads vision of inclusive education

In answer to the question on how the school heads envision inclusive education in their schools 60% of the principals expressed positive attitude toward the incorporation of SPED-IE in their schools. One principal who had just organized SPED-IE in her school said:

SY 2006-2007 was the first year of SPED 'pull out system'. Some parents don't like to hear that their son/daughter was SPED recipient, however, this year 2007-2008, some parents even recommend their child for the SPED class. Since this has just started, LGU and DepEd officials should help in the financial aspect of this program since it is a great help to our pupils who really need our attention. (Principal A)

Another principal wrote:

We envision that these children in our care will be given the best possible basic education because we know some of them are very difficult to teach. Serving these children takes a lot of patience and including them in school is our concern and risk. We do believe that we can improve their lifestyle, and also other children will learn to show concern and understand their differences. Through this program we will be able to accept our role as teachers that the less privileged should also be given equal attention (Principal H).

Another principal believes that SPED-IE is improving the performance of special students in her school.

Although being new to this program, I have noticed that its implementation to the Central School made a great impact on the improvement of academic standing and reading abilities of students/pupils with special needs. In our school, we identified these pupils with Mild Mental Retardation (MMR) found

in the classroom and we use the pull out system in mentoring them (Principal D).

There is still much to do in maintaining and sustaining SPED-IE in public elementary schools. Principal B wrote a very insightful comment on the implementation of SPED-IE:

The success of the implementation of SPED-IE in regular schools depends on the attitudes of the regular teacher in accepting the special child. If the regular teachers who are willing to be part of the SPED-IE program would have proper training, I'm sure that the improvement of the learning outcomes of a school would be successful. Not all regular teachers are oriented or trained about the SPED-IE program, thus they have negative attitude in having a special learner in their classroom (Principal B).

Discussion and conclusion

The impact of SPED-IE in the TEEP schools is closely linked to the readiness of the school heads in creating a highly effective learning environment. This study sought to identify the SPED-IE practices that worked well in the selected schools. Principals and teachers voiced their problems and successes while implementing SPED-IE. In schools where the school head explicitly set the example in welcoming students with special needs, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and participation among stakeholders, SPED-IE is developing well. In schools where the school heads do not have background knowledge on and positive attitude towards students with special needs, SPED-IE is not developing as expected. Lack of training on the part of those who replaced the principals who retired or were promoted is another factor that slowed down the development of SPED-IE in their schools.

The infusion of funds during the TEEP specifically for inclusive education contributed to the increase of public awareness of special education. Thus many students were identified and provided special education services. While funds for SPED-IE were problematic, some schools have actually improved their programs for students with special needs.

The DepEd should follow-up on the gains of the TEEP-SBM-IE project. Three areas of concern emerged during the study. First, in the provinces and remote areas, there is a need for the national government to support and finance special education programs as articulated by some principals. Schools with sustainable SPED programs should be identified and made into models for other school divisions instead of requiring all school divisions to establish SPED programs that are not viable and are not following appropriate practices and policies. Second, capacity building of school heads, administrators, teachers, and division supervisors should be enhanced and continued. Continuous training of school heads is needed to expand their knowledge in inclusive education, teamwork skills, and organizational knowledge. Likewise, the training of principals must be planned in such a way that they stay in their schools for at least three years so SPED-IE can take roots. Moreover, transformational leadership should be encouraged. Initiatives and resourcefulness among school heads and teachers to promote SPED-IE should be rewarded and recognized.

The training of teachers should further include regular teachers. The lack of knowledge of SPED-IE is a cause of negative attitudes, thus act as barrier to the success of inclusive education. As each school is different in terms of number and composition of teachers, a faculty-development plan on SPED-IE should be part of the school improvement plan (SIP). SPED and regular teachers will have to learn to work as collaborators, each providing their own expertise to make students learn. After a year of working in isolation the newly trained SPED teachers have realized that the students are better served if both regular and special teachers worked together as a team. Thus, SPED-IE as currently practiced in the schools, needs to be refined and further clarified.

Third, the support and responsiveness of School Division supervisors to SPED-IE have been less than expected. School Division support should extend to forming linkages with local state colleges and universities with special education courses. Continuous training programs can be arranged within the area of the public schools by working with universities and colleges school. Important educational reforms are likewise within reach if schools could conduct studies with universities and colleges for the purpose of identifying and assessing educational situations and instructional strategies.

Finally, moving towards inclusive education will not happen overnight. Even supporters of SBM warn against expecting too much too soon. This study can act as springboard to more studies on the practice and implementation of SPED-IE in the public schools. Finally, the words of UN-rapporteur B. Linquist should guide the policy makers and the educators:

All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses, with their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. It is not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children (UNESCO, 2003).

References

- Almario, E. (1984). *Teacher's perception on the effects of mainstreaming children in selected schools in Metro Manila*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines.
- Camara, E.F. (2003) *Situation of children with special needs in the Philippines*. Special Education Area, College of Education, UP Diliman.
- Dela Torre, E. (1995). *Home school partnerships and school effectiveness*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

- DepEd. (2006a). *Five-year development plan on SPED-inclusive education for nine TEEP provinces*. Pasig City: DepEd.
- DepEd. (2006b). *Operations manual on school-based management and its support systems*. January 2006. Pasig City: DepEd.
- DepEd. (2006c). *Third elementary education program report card*. Pasig City: DepEd.
- DepEd. (2006d). *Transforming education from the ground: Fifty studies of school-based management under the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP)*. Bautista, M.C.R. (Ed.). Pasig City: DepEd.
- Dufour, R. & Berkey, T. (1995). The principal as staff developer. *Journal of Staff Development*, Fall 1995, 16(4). Retrieved on September 9, 2002, from <http://nsdc.or/library/jsd/dufour%20164.html>.
- Gaw, G.R. (2000). *Parental involvement in the early intervention of children with special needs*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.
- Gertler, P., Patrinos, H.A., & M. Rubio-Codina, M. (Eds.). (2006). *Impact evaluation for school based management reform*. World Bank. Dec. 2007. Retrieved on December 28, 2008, from <http://www.worldbank.org/education>.
- Glickman, C.D. (1993). Renewing America's schools: A guide for school-based action. In Mary T. Apodaca-Tucker, & John R. Slate. *School-Based Management: Views from Public and Private Elementary School Principals*. April 28, 2002. Education Policy Analysis Archives, vol. 10, no. 23, ISSN 1068-2341. Retrieved on October 9, 2006, from <http://epaa/asu.edu/epaa/v10n23.html>.
- International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED (1997). Retrieved on February 18, 2004 from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-RL_ID=11895&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
- Jimenez, E and Sawada, Y. (1999). Do community-managed schools work? An Evaluation of El Salvador's EDUCO Program. *The World Bank Economic Review*.13 (3)415-41. Retrieved on August 15, 2007, from <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/globaleducationreform/pdf/EL%20SALVADORf.pdf>.
- Kochba, C. & Gopal, M. (1998) In Gordon L. Porter. *Disability and education: Toward an inclusive education approach*. Retrieved on February 10, 2007, from <http://www.unesco.org/education/inclusive>.
- Linguist, B. (1999). Education as fundamental right. In S.J. Peters (2004). *Update in Inclusive Education, an EFA Strategy for All Children*. World Bank. Retrieved on September 27, 2006, from <http://www.unesco.org/education/inclusive>.
- Lontoc, C.L. (1997). *Programs, services and facilities for children with mental retardation in selected public schools in NCR: Implications to SPED administrators*. Unpublished masters' thesis. University of the Philippines.
- McLaughlin, M. (1993). Promising practices and future directions for special education. *NICHY News Digest*. 2 (2) 35. Retrieved on October 9, 2006, from <http://www.nichy.org>.
- Padilla, E.T. (2002). *The adequacy and effectiveness of the special education program in Negros Occidental*. Unpublished masters' thesis. University of the Philippines.
- Porter, G.L. (1997). In P.S. Jan, C.J.W. Meijer, & S. Hegarty (Eds.). *Inclusive education: A global agenda*. Routledge.
- Praisner, C.L. (2005). Attitudes of elementary school principals toward inclusion of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*. 69(2)135-145.
- Republic Act 9155 (2001). Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. Congress of the Philippines, 12th Congress.
- Rogoff (1995), In M.A. Gallego, R. Rueda, & L.C. Moll. (2005). Multilevel approaches to documenting change: Challenges in community-based educational research. *Teachers College Record*. 107 (10) 2299-2325.
- Rotor, E.R. (1998). *Parent professional partnership in early intervention of children with developmental disabilities*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines.
- Salamanca Statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education. (1994). Retrieved on

- February 18, 2004, from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0009/000984/098427eo.pdf>.
- Sandoval, P.P. (2001). *Concerns of parents related to their special children's termination of schooling*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines.
- Sarillo, L.A. (1993). *Parents' perception of their role in education and their level of participation in school affairs*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines.
- Singayan, M.C.I. (1987). *The nature and extent of parent involvement in the education of mentally retarded children*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of the Philippines.
- Tsang, N.G. (2004). *Principal's and regular teachers' perceptions of inclusion*. Unpublished masters's thesis. University of the Philippines.
- UNESCO. (2004). The right to education for persons with disabilities: Towards inclusion. Conceptual Paper, Dec. 2004. ED/BAS/EIE/2004/1 rev.
- UNESCO. (2005). Decentralization in education: National policies and practices. Retrieved on April 10, 2006, <http://www.unesco.org/education/inclusive>.
- Villanueva, A.V. (1993). *Factors affecting parents' behavior as partners in education*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of the Philippines, Quezon City.
- World Bank. (2004). Inclusive education: An EFA strategy for all children. Retrieved on October 9, 2006, from <http://www.worldbank.org/education>.

Date received: June 2008

Ingrid R. Yap is the founder and directress of Kids World Integrated School, Inc. The school is on its 15th year of providing pre-school education. In 2007, the Special Education Program of her school was officially recognized by the Department of Education. The author has been practicing inclusive education in her school for the last seven years.

Mercedes P. Adorio is retired Professor of Special Education from the College of Education, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City. She is also founder-owner of Fairfield, a special school located in Diliman, Quezon City.