

PHILIPPINES

THEME: IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE AND ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

A SUMMARY OF COUNTRY REPORT

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Every child with special needs deserves all the support we can give. Such support encompasses basic needs provision, health services, protection and psychosocial assistance, education and life-skills training. Such support bespeaks not of piece-meal, fragmented intervention services but of a range, a continuum of coordinated, developmental career-education programs. We all believe, after all, that when we talk of a special child, we talk of a future.

This summary presents what the Philippines has done and does in line with providing a future for its special children especially those with intellectual disabilities.

The Philippines, through its relevant laws, mandates the compulsory education of Filipino children including those with special needs from elementary till secondary levels. Elementary covers a period of six years while secondary four years. Several factors impede the school attendance of many Filipino children. Notable among these are the following:

1. Rebel/ Insurgent-military conflicts in specific parts of the country compelling families to evacuate from one place to another; thus, disrupting schooling,

2. Limitations along advocacy and information dissemination,
3. Socio-cultural orientation including attitudes and idiosyncrasies,
4. The far distances especially of special schools/classes, if available, to the homes of the children,
5. Parents' expectations of their children to assist them in their work especially in agricultural communities, and in highly urbanized areas, to augment family income, and
6. Economic constraints that relate to the aforementioned factors and others not included.

Special education in the Philippines has undergone significant transformation since the establishment of the first SPED program by a team of Thomasites in the early 1900. Patterned after American perspectives and models in most aspects, special education in the country has incorporated into its programs several local/indigenous concepts and schemes customized to meet the needs of Filipino special children, their families, and communities. With the advent of normalization in the late 1960's and continuing on till the present, special education and general education in the Philippines have never been in such union before than they are today. The movement from segregation to integration has been met receptively but special classes and schools continue on to exist especially for children with low-functioning abilities and in areas where the mainstream/inclusion perspective has not yet pervaded. The exodus of SPED teachers to greener pastures abroad and centralization of most SPED programs/schools especially at the secondary and post-secondary levels in densely-populated urban areas have adverse effects on the quality of classes/programs and the creation of more.

A number of significant and relevant research undertakings have been done on these topics: a) employability of individuals with intellectual disabilities, b) career preparation for individuals with intellectual disabilities, c) vocational program proposals, d) evaluation of vocational program curricula, and e) concerns of parents related to their children's termination of schooling, among others. The translation of research findings into concrete practices has not been amply realized. Thus, theoretical bases/frameworks are available but implementation has not been at pace with current developments.

Transition for special students by way of further schooling, further job training or competitive employment needs much support in Philippine education. Vocational training has been strengthened in many public schools but the impact of such may not guarantee adequate competence for competitive jobs in the community. On-the-job-training or apprenticeship and sheltered workshops run by private schools/institutions, foundations, non-government agencies, and civic-spirited individuals and organizations provide much brighter opportunities and more adept vocational training approximating job-market demands.

Priorities in the job market of a growing economy such as the Philippines' specify steep criteria and qualifications. We are, therefore, deeply concerned how Philippine education can systematically and purposively meet the challenge of training individuals with intellectual disabilities to achieve optimally.

Special education in the Philippines adopts a Life-Centered – Career Education model which enables special learners to go through a purposive process - from school entry to exit – equipping them with skills and competencies at every level in the continuum. Such skills and competencies revolve around specific but related themes and involve progressive movement toward functional life skills that will enable a learner:

To care for himself.

To work.

To pursue leisure.

To assume personal responsibilities.

To form meaningful relationships, possibly even to marry and raise a family.

To be an involved member of the community.

How is a career education concept translated into a workable curricular program for learners with intellectual disabilities? Presented below is a framework of the transition process:

Career education starts from school entry to exit even extending up to post-secondary education when adult education, sheltered workshops and apprenticeship programs can be available through government funding and sponsorship by business establishments and non-government agencies. The process of career education consists of four basic stages, namely: a) career awareness, b) career exploration, c) career preparation, and d) career assimilation.

Career awareness involves the identification of the needs, abilities and potentials of the learner with intellectual disabilities. It introduces him to the environment, the workers therein and their contributions to the community, and the interdependence of workers toward shared goals for community welfare and development.

Career exploration involves a better familiarity with the nature of job and the workplace of each worker. It assists the learner to understand and appreciate work processes and their implications to daily living. It also enables him to see himself better in relation to the nature of jobs.

Career preparation enables the learner with intellectual disabilities to acquire skills through informal and formal training. Provision of sheltered workshops, apprenticeship and other formats of work training characterizes this stage. Work values and attitudes are sharply focused on alongside related topics such as safety, money matters and workers' rights and privileges.

Career assimilation involves provision of actual work with support from trainers, social workers and other human-service workers.

Below is a matrix showing an example how the Life-Centered - Career Education Model is operationalized through the educational continuum:

Career Education Stage	Theme	Sample Lesson/Skill
A. Career Awareness (Approximately Grades 1-3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understanding Self 2. Acquisition of Daily Living Skills 3. Acquisition of Academic-Related Skills 4. Physical and Psychomotor Training 5. Workers in the Community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning basic information about self 2. Specific lessons in eating, dressing, grooming 3. Writing, reading, simple computation 4. Fine and gross-motor training Simple tasks 5. Knowing workers in the community
B. Career Exploration (Approximately Grades 4-6)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the World of Work 2. Development of Values and Attitudes 3. Increasing Psychosocial and Work-Related Skills 4. Increasing Academic-Related Skills 5. Refining Psychomotor Skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why people work, what workers do 2. Sharing, accepting suggestions 3. Observing rules, cooperating 4. Reading labels, filling up forms, money computation 5. Performing routine chores
C. Career Preparation (Approximately Grades 7-10)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work Skills and Analysis of Occupations 2. Work Values, Attitudes and Habits 3. Human Relationships in the Workplace 4. Getting a Job 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowing nature of work 2. Finishing work till completion 3. Consulting others Accepting suggestions for self-improvement 4. Ready application letter, submitting oneself for interview, apprenticeship
D. Career Assimilation (Post-Secondary Level)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job Performance 2. Safety Matters 3. Rights and Benefits of Workers 4. Handling Finances 5. Leisure and Human Relationships 6. Work Ethics 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work efficiency and productivity 2. Traveling, protecting oneself from dangers 3. Work compensation, protecting oneself from harassment 4. Budgeting and saving 5. Recreation 6. Observing time schedule for work

We in special education confront a challenge requiring deep commitment and dedication. Let us join hands to help every learner with special needs actualize his potentials and be the best that he can!