

## Management Level of Special Education Teachers (SPET) on handling Learners with Special Needs (LSEN)

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### Abstract

*This study assessed and evaluated the SPED program in a limited capacity. It tried to quantify the socio demographic profile of the LSEN, their participation, academic standing, and their parent's perception of the SPET handling their child. From the data, it can be surmised that there is no regular distribution in terms of the age of the SPED Learners. It can be seen that the combined number of 13-year-olds and 15-year-olds is still below the number of 14-year-olds. This may suggest that there is no regular number of enrollees in SPED. SPED learners, especially the LSEN, have a diverse disabilities. The majority of the SPED learners (56%) always attend their class. However, a significant portion of the SPED learners (16%) reported their teachers as at risk of dropping out. In terms of academic grades, most SPED learners' grades are clustered around the 80-84 mark with an occasional higher or lower rate. The learners often participate in extracurricular activities, but they seem to have problems working with regular students. The results generally show positive responses from SPED learners' parents regarding SPET's dedication to teaching, empathy, and ability to identify individual differences.*

**Keywords:** 1.Management Level, 2.Special Education Teachers, 3. Learners, 4.Special Needs

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## Introduction

BP no. 232, also known as the "Education Act of 1982," provides that the state shall promote the right of every individual to relevant, quality education regardless of sex, age, breed, socio-economic status, physical and mental condition, and social or ethnic group. Article XIV of the 1987 Constitutions of the Philippines also guarantees this right to quality of access to education and the enjoyment of the benefits of education by all its citizens. This right is included in Philippine Law in the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities (PWD), (1992), and in international law in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified in the Philippines in 2008. Concerned with the provisions, the Department of Education (DepEd) assumes leadership and responsibility to provide opportunities for the maximum development of the child with special needs to become valuable and influential members of society through an organized particular education program

In striving to educate as many children as possible and with limited funds to build a separate particular education infrastructure to cater to the needs of children with disabilities, inclusive education was officially adopted in 1997 by the Department of Education in the Philippines as a viable educational alternative (Inciong& Quijano 2013). Inclusive Education is a learning environment where children with and without disabilities are taught together in one roof as equals. It is recognized by teachers, families, and policymakers to be a more beneficial way of ensuring that children with and without disabilities achieve their full educational potential (LCD Phil. Foundation, 2010).

Hence the San Jose City National High School (SJCNHS), formerly Constancio Padilla National High School (CPNHS), opened the Special Education (SPED) Class for the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in School Year 2007-2008. The program responds to the present need of disabled students who graduated from elementary. The program started in June 2007 under the administration of Mr. Nicanor R. Ventura, Secondary School Principal IV of San Jose City National High School. The schedule for the SPED was designed for mainstream inclusion; the learners to attend the regular classes in all subject areas with a primary focus on core subjects; Mathematics, English, Science and Filipino and non-academic activities with the Special Education Teachers (SPET) to interpret the lessons through sign language.

In June 2010, under the new administration of Dr. Catalina P. Paez, Secondary School Principal IV, Mr. Lordennis T. Leonardo, Values Education Department Head and SPED Coordinator, worked for additional Special Education Teachers and facilities for the program. Mrs. Noemi C. Cariaga, with her knowledge and expertise in sign language, was hired as a full-time teacher. A SPED Center Classroom was then organized and solely for the SPED.

The increasing number of special education students in the school calls for a need to provide more information and training about the program, including managing specific disabilities, since they are responsible for implementing these. However, there has been little research that studies and explores the experiences of SPET and learners with special needs (LSEN) in the process of inclusion in the regular education setting. Furthermore, the ratio between SPED teachers and SPED learners is alarmingly lacking. There is two SPET in junior High School. They handle two grade levels each; if the Special Education Teacher is in the other grade level, regular classroom teachers struggle in teaching SPED learners due to the lack of knowledge in handling them. The researcher believes that if the school wishes to strengthen the Special Education Program further, there is a need to evaluate the program so that issues and challenges will be addressed.

The researcher believes that the result of this study can be a valuable help to the administrators and SPET in identifying the areas of strength and areas of improvement of the Special Education program, including the mainstreaming of LSEN in the regular class. The study's recommendations can be a basis for designing a program or activities to improve quality education services to serve the learners better.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objectives of the study are to determine the management level of SPET in SPED in terms of their academic progress and satisfactory rate of LSEN.

The specific objectives to guide the study are as follows:

1. To describe the socio-demographic profile of the respondents
2. To determine the academic progress of SEN
3. To determine the LSEN participation
4. To determine parents' perception of the SPET in handling their children.
5. To determine the relationship between the socio-demographic profile and academic progress of respondents, learners participation
6. To determine the relationship between the academic progress and learner's participation with parents rating of SPET in handling their child.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Special Education in the Philippines**

We are slowly generating positive results in partnership efforts with other government agencies, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders. Below are some of the concerns besetting the SPED programs which have been correspondingly addressed:

#### **1. Inadequate Special Education Services throughout the Country.**

This may be attributed to the availability of teachers trained in special education. While there is still a good number of special children unaccounted for, either they are out of school or in school but have not been identified, somehow it can be said that the country's SPED program is now a "milestone towards making a dream."

#### **2. Limited Facilities, Materials, and Equipment for Systematic and Scientific Early Identification and Screening Procedure**

This remains a drawback in some public elementary schools with SPED programs, except for a handful of schools like the Philippine School for the Deaf (PSD), one of the country's special schools.

#### **3. Early Intervention Program Is Not Sufficient**

An initiative has been undertaken by the SPED Division of the Department of Education in collaboration with Christoffel Blinden-Mission International, an NGO in conducting Training Workshops since 1998 for SPED and regular teachers, social workers, and parents of children with disabilities for them to be trained in the home teaching process using the Portage Guide to Early Intervention.

#### **4. Fast Turn-Over of Special Education Teachers**

Many SPED-trained teachers have left the service in favor of better pay abroad schools offer. Or, some quickly get promoted to higher positions. One way of holding back teachers from their jobs is to provide incentives and welfare benefits. The Department of Education issued DECS Order No. 5, s. 1998 articulates the need to reclassify regular teachers' items to special education teachers' items.

#### **5. Imbalance between the Demand and Supply for SPED-Trained Personnel**

Institutionalization of the SPED program in regular schools was mandated through DECS Order No. 26, s. 1997. This was deemed essential to address the increasing demand of clients with special needs in light of the absence of trained SPED teachers. Through the directive, all school divisions must organize at least one SPED Center in each school division.

## **6. Attitudinal Barrier**

Recent developments showed that the Commission on Higher Education had directed all teacher-training institutions to offer the curriculum units in special education. This will entitle each prospective teacher to gain and equip themselves with the knowledge and skills of handling children with special needs.

## **7. Lack of Coordination among Government Agencies in the Provision of Programs and Services**

While there are no consolidated efforts in coming up with a systematic program from identification to the transition of children with special needs before, this time the Department of Social Welfare and Development through the National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP) has taken the lead role in this task.

## **8. Dearth of Researches and Studies re Children with Special Needs**

In recent years, special education has gained recognition among enthusiasts, like teachers and even parents, to embark on research and further their studies in special education, especially on inclusive education.

### **Inclusive Education**

To date, the government support to improve access to quality education for all is still very limited. The deficit in classrooms, teaching and learning resources and qualified teachers are still to be addressed. Few schools in the country offer special classes for children with special needs, and mainstreaming courses may answer. However, integrating SEN into a regular classroom poses many challenges. Mainstreaming of SEN has positive and negative effects on SEN and non-SEN students, and the entire environment is not yet ready for such conditions.

### **Methodology**

This study utilized the descriptive method of research. Survey questionnaires were used and an interview as methods for gathering information. For this study, convenience sampling was used to select the sample population. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents. Interviews were also conducted to gather essential data further. Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The place of the study is San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines.

### **Results and Discussion**

Table 1 shows the data describing the socio demographic profile of the learners. The first socio demographic profile considered is Age. It can be surmised that there is no regular

distribution in terms of the age of the SPED Learners. It can be seen that the combined number of 13-year-olds and 15-year-olds is still below the number of 14-year-olds. This may suggest that there is no regular number of enrollees in SPED. Another variable looked into was the gender of the SPED Learners. It can be seen that there are more female SPED learners compared to male SPED learners.

Same with age, the Grade Level of the learners are irregularly distributed. This is a problem because the unbalanced class sizes need different attention. SPED learners, especially the LSEN, have a diverse disabilities. Thus, even for the SPET, coping with them may seem daunting. The result showed that 15 learners (60%) suffered from hearing loss. This is why SPET's are concerned with learning sign language, as this is the way to communicate with most SPED learners.

The majority of the SPED learners (56%) always attend their class. However, a significant portion of the SPED learners (16%) reported their teachers as at risk of dropping out. This is a concern because this dropout rate is significantly higher than that of the regular class if not addressed. The family income level of the SPED learner's family suggests that only four (16%) of the learners are from a low-income family as their monthly income falls below the 10,000-Peso mark by NEDA as the poverty threshold.

Lastly, the SPED learners can come from small families with 1 to 3 children. The maximum family size reported by the SPED learners is four children. Family size or the number of children in the family can affect the performance of SPED learners as they need more care and attention.

### **Academic Progress of SPED Learners**

In terms of academic grades, most SPED learners' grades are clustered around the 80-84 mark with an occasional higher or lower quality (Table 2). It is worth noting that there are no failing grades recorded on the quarter considered for this study.

### **SPED Learners Participation**

Table3 shows that the learners often participate in extracurricular activities, but they have a problem working with regular students. However, the LSEN seldom exhibits maladaptive behavior.

### **Parents Perception of SPET's Dedication to Teaching**

Perceptions of parents are essential in improving the relationship between teacher and parent. This part of the survey takes into account the different perceptions of parents.

The results generally show positive responses except for the statements about adjusting teaching style, assuring that every learner meets the requirements and determines weaknesses and strengths of every learner (Table 4).

### **Parents Perception of SPET's Empathy for Learners**

In terms of parents' perception of SPET's Empathy for learners showing all the indicators suggest that SPET teachers are often empathic of their learners (Table 5). Three statements got above three in terms of the mean. These are: Shows no frustrations to teach despite learning difficulties of learners with highest mean of 3.20 with “always Observed as descriptive rating. This was followed by being Approachable and open to discussion with the learners (Mean=3.02), Understanding learners' conditions, and adjusting to learners' needs (Mean=3.01) with Often observed descriptions. This is needed as SPED learners need more understanding and caring teachers.

### **Parents Perception of SPET's Ability to Identify Learners Diversity**

As with empathy for learners, the parents also perceive that the SPETs can identify learners' diversity (Table 6). The statement “Show respect and concern for students' differences” got the highest mean with a mean score of 3.39. While statement “Shows diligence in identifying learners' needs” got the lowest mean score of 2.91.

This is not surprising as, according to the SPETs, they have undergone training and have expert mentoring in these seminars.

### **Correlation between Socio-demographic Profile and Grades in Eight Subjects**

Table 7 shows the correlation between Gender and grades in Math, Science, and EsP. This correlation means that the male learners tend to have higher rates in those three subjects. This result is not definitive as this study discusses the SPED learners with different disabilities and the correlation level is not strong. Further research is needed to establish if gender is the factor for SPED learners having better grades.

Also, Age and Grade Level are positively correlated with Math, Science, English, and Filipino grades. This suggests that the older higher-grade level SPED learners have better grades in all four academic subjects. This result indicates that as the SPED learners move up the grade levels, they may be more adapted to studying. This suggests academic growth for SPED learners as they go through the program.

A positive but significant correlation was found between the parent's monthly income of the parents to grades in Science and MAPEH, which means the higher the parents' payment, the higher the rates in the above-stated subjects. This is expected because, as of the quarter under consideration in this study, these two subjects had major projects wherein those with better means produced better projects.

### **Correlation between Socio-demographic Profile and SPED Participation**

Table 8 shows a positive but significant correlation between Age and joining activities outside the school. This means that older SPED learners have greater exposure to outside-the-school activities.

Gender and maladaptive behavior are also significantly correlated with each other. This means that male SPED learners are more susceptible to exhibiting maladaptive behaviors.

Grade level seems to be a great indicator of being more participative than SPED learners. This is corroborated by the correlations found between Grade level and joining extracurricular activities, working with regular learners, and participating in class discussion. This validates the results above, suggesting that older higher-grade level learners better adapted to studying.

The number of siblings is negatively correlated with joining the extracurricular activities. This suggests that the SPED learner with more minor or no siblings tends to be more exposed to extracurricular activities. This can be explained because SPED learners who are only children or with fewer siblings will have more support from their parents.

### **Correlation between SPED Participation and SPET's Perceived Qualities**

Generally, the results show that there is not much correlation between the perceived qualities of the SPETs and the Participation of the SPED learners except in four instances. The first correlation is between the SPET's assurance that all materials are well prepared, and the ability of the SPED learners to work with others. The more prepared the SPET, the more participative the SPED learners are. One peculiar correlation is between how punctual SPETs have more SPED learners are to join in an extracurricular activity. This may be because parents who the SPET handle their child as more punctual are more motivated to participate in extracurricular activities.

The last two correlations are between providing supplementary activities and LSEN joining extracurricular activities and exhibiting maladaptive behavior. If SPETs are perceived to prepare more supplementary activities, LSEN tends to participate more in extracurricular activities and exhibit less maladaptive behavior.

### **Conclusions**

From the data, it can be concluded that there is no regular distribution in terms of the age of the SPED Learners. This may suggest that there is no standard number of enrollees in SPED. SPED learners, especially the LSEN, have a diverse disabilities. The SPED learners' grades with an occasional higher or lower rate in academic degrees. The learners often participate in extracurricular activities, but they seem to have problems working with regular students. There are generally positive responses from parents of SPED learners

when it comes to SPET's dedication to teaching, empathy, and ability to identify individual differences.

## Recommendations

From the results of this study, the following recommendation is made:

1.School administrators and Division officials should provide other SPED learners with educational facilities and materials like braille for the visually impaired, additional wheelchair, and televisions to help teachers lessen their task and focus on teaching.

2.Division officials should provide additional SPET teachers instead of teacher aid to lessen the teacher-to-student ratio, which is 1:27 considering that most learners have different disabilities.

3.School administrators and Division officials should provide SPET and even regular teachers training or seminar in the proper integration or mainstream of learners with special needs into the regular class.

4.Other researchers should conduct further research that would help improve teacher's level of management and determine other needs of SPED learners.

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**Table 1. Socio-demographic Profile of the SPED Learners**

<b>Sociodemographic Profile</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Age</b>		
13 years old	4	16.00
14 years old	9	36.00
15 years old	3	12.00
16 years old	7	28.00
17 years old	2	8.00
N	25	100.00
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	10	40.00
Female	15	60.00
N	25	100.00
<b>Grade Level</b>		
Grade 7	4	16.00
Grade 8	8	32.00
Grade 9	5	20.00
Grade 10	8	32.00
N	25	100.00
<b>Disability</b>		
Hearing Impaired	15	60.00
Low Vision	2	8.00
Speech/Learning Disability	4	16.00
Cerebral Palsy	2	8.00
Autism	1	4.00
Intellectual Disability	1	4.00
N	25	80.00
<b>Class Attendance</b>		
No absences	14	56.00
1-4 absences	6	24.00
4-8 absences	1	4.00
At the risk of dropping out	4	16.00
N	25	100.00

Family Income		
< 10,000.00	4	16.00
10,001.00-15,000.00	2	8.00
15,001.00-20,000.00	11	44.00
20,001.00-25,000.00	3	12.00
>25,000.00	5	20.00
N	25	100.00
Number of Siblings		
0	2	8.00
1	12	48.00
2	6	24.00
3	5	20.00
N	25	100.00

**Table 2. Academic Progress of SPED Learners**

Academic Progress (given grade)	a	Math	Science	English	Filipino	AP	TITLE	MAP	EsP
>90		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
85-89		2	2	0	1	1	1	2	2
80-84		17	19	23	21	19	15	21	20
75-79		4	2	0	1	3	7	0	1
<75		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 3. SPED Learners Participation**

LSEN Participation	WM	Description
<b>Extracurricular Activity</b>		
Joined in an academic, extracurricular activity.	2.89	Often Observed
Joined in subject related activities	2.56	Often Observed
Joined other activities outside the school	3.13	Often Observed
<b>Mainstreaming in Regular Class</b>		
Works with other regular students in mainstream	2.36	Seldom Observed
Participates in-class discussion	2.77	Often Observed
Exhibits maladaptive behaviors	2.38	Seldom Observed

**Table 4. Parents Perception of SPET's Dedication to Teaching**

Dedication to teaching	WM	Description
Demonstrate enthusiasm in teaching	2.61	Often Observed
Exerts extra effort in preparing oneself in teaching	2.65	Often Observed
Assures that all necessary materials needed in teaching are well prepared and organized.	3.32	Always Observed
Demonstrate punctuality before, during, and after teaching.	3.36	Always Observed
Applies innovative ways of teaching.	2.85	Often Observed
Flexible in any circumstances where teaching is most like to be affected.	2.82	Often Observed
Always excited to teach	2.74	Often Observed
Able to adjust teaching style to meet students learning techniques to achieve better teaching results.	2.44	Seldom Observed
Assures that every learner meets and complies with every day's activity.	2.44	Seldom Observed
Determines weaknesses and strengths of every learner.	2.41	Seldom Observed
Provides supplementary activity for the slow learners and enhances activities for the advanced learners	3.34	Always Observed

**Table 5. Parents Perception of SPET's Empathy for Learners**

Empathy for learners	WM	Description
Shows compassion to learners	2.89	Often Observed
Understands learners' condition and adjust to learners needs	3.01	Often Observed
Shows no frustrations to teach despite learning difficulties of learners	3.20	Always Observed
Creates a friendly atmosphere for the learners	2.99	Always Observed
Approachable and open to discussion to the learners	3.02	Often Observed
Willing to listen and understand learner's problems, both personal and non-personal cases	2.73	Often Observed
Conduct home visitation to know learners background to understand learners emotional condition further	2.65	Often Observed

**Table 6. Parents Perception of SPET's Ability to Identify Learners Diversity**

Identify Learners Diversity	WM	Description
Shows diligence in identifying learners' needs.	2.81	Often Observed
Know techniques and strategies in designing/selecting activities for varied learners.	3.16	Often Observed
Show respect and concern for individual differences of students.	3.39	Always Observed
Appreciate the need to consider the differences in experiences and capabilities of learners.	2.94	Often Observed
Pace lessons according to learners' needs and difficulties.	3.31	Always Observed

**Table 7. Correlation between Socio-demographic Profile and Grades in Eight Subjects**

	Math	Science	English	Filipino	AP	TITLE	MAP	EsP
Age	<b>0.275*</b>	<b>0.278*</b>	<b>0.305*</b>	0.206	-0.126	0.181	-0.242	-0.135
Gender	<b>0.292*</b>	<b>-0.273*</b>	0.221	-0.153	0.111	-0.214	0.156	<b>0.262*</b>
Grade Level	<b>0.276*</b>	<b>0.322*</b>	<b>0.277*</b>	<b>0.285*</b>	0.126	-0.233	0.024	0.024
Total number of class attendance	-0.061	0.035	0.262	-0.191	-0.211	-0.117	0.109	-0.164
Monthly income of the parents	0.108	<b>0.282*</b>	0.238	0.07	-0.246	-0.138	<b>0.288</b>	0.033
Number of siblings	0.113	0.014	0.096	-0.15	0.232	0.235	-0.156	-0.104

**Table 8. Correlation between Socio-demographic Profile and SPED Participation**

	Extracurricular Activity			Mainstreaming in Regular Class		
	I joined in an extracurricular activity.	Joined in subject related activities	Joined other activities outside the school	Works with other regular students in mainstream	Participates in-class discussion	Exhibits maladaptive behaviors
Age	0.203	0.069	<b>0.309*</b>	-0.165	0.208	-0.158
Gender	0.232	-0.13	-0.156	0.208	-0.165	<b>-0.283*</b>
Grade	<b>0.319**</b>	0.078	-0.057	<b>0.261*</b>	<b>0.272*</b>	-0.053

Level Attendance	-0.187	-0.197	0.117	-0.064	-0.186	0.158
Monthly income of the parents	0.191	-0.154	0.154	0.152	-0.205	0.149
Number of siblings	<b>-0.308*</b>	-0.062	-0.07	0.094	0.205	-0.004

**Table 9. Correlation between SPED Participation and SPET's Perceived Qualities**

	I joined in an academic extracurricular activity.	Joined in subject related activities	Joined other activities outside the school	Works with other regular students in mainstream	Participates in-class discussion	Exhibits maladaptive behaviors
Demonstrate enthusiasm in teaching	-0.015	-0.104	0.061	0.088	0.031	-0.086
Exerts extra effort in preparing oneself in teaching	-0.164	-0.021	0.101	0.042	0.110	-0.083
Assures that all necessary materials needed in teaching are well prepared and organized.	-0.218	-0.231	0.111	<b>0.275*</b>	-0.168	-0.173
Demonstrate punctuality before, during, and after teaching.	<b>0.265*</b>	-0.145	0.162	0.004	0.203	-0.140
Applies innovative ways of teaching.	0.249	0.031	-0.040	0.275	-0.106	-0.118
Flexible in any circumstances where teaching is most like to be affected.	-0.162	0.297	0.111	0.292	-0.057	0.025
Always excited to teach	0.230	-0.140	-0.068	0.025	0.075	0.193
Able to adjust teaching style to meet students learning techniques to achieve better teaching results.	-0.116	0.135	0.206	-0.079	-0.071	-0.221

Assures that every learner meets and complies with every day's activity.	-0.050	0.207	0.110	-0.072	-0.194	0.181
Determines weaknesses and strengths of every learner.	0.045	0.199	-0.306	0.090	0.041	0.082
Provides supplementary activity for the slow learners and enhances activities for the advanced learners	<b>0.311**</b>	0.172	0.185	0.100	-0.249	<b>-0.291*</b>

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