PANTAO
(International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences)
Volume 5, Issue 3
ISSN 3028-0877 | e-ISSN 3155-6043 | DOI 10.69651/2022PIJHSS

The implementation of the special education program: The Loreto West District experience

Fabiola Shannah T. Branzuela*
Agusan Colleges, Inc., Butuan City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This research determined the extent of the implementation of the Special Education Program at the Loreto West District. The data of these variables were collected through research instrument in the form of survey questionnaire that contained the teachers' profile in terms of age, gender, and educational being handled by the receiving teachers and the indicators to determine to what extent the Special Education Program has been implemented in the Loreto West District. The statistical tools utilized in this study were weighted mean, frequency, percentage and correlation analysis. The data gathered showed that the Special Education program was only fairly implemented based on the participants' responses. In the correlation analysis, the results showed that among the teachers' profile, only the age correlates with the extent of Special Education Implementation. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level of significance. On the other hand, all other variables do not correlate hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Keywords: Extent of special education implementation, receiving teachers, special education, special education program.

Date Submitted: June 30, 2026
Date Accepted: July 22, 2026
Date Published: July 18, 2026

INTRODUCTION

For children to make a significant contribution to society, they must have the opportunity to develop their gifts and skills. Thus, education for learners with disabilities (LWD) has the same objective as education for children without disabilities: to help them achieve their full potential and live fulfilling lives as valued members of their communities (Hayes and Bulat 2017). However, specialized services and accommodations are frequently necessary for children with special needs to learn the lesson being taught. In order to address this issue, a campaign was initiated during the World Conference in the early 1990s, which included representatives from the World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF, to ensure universal access to education, which has gained momentum ever since. Education for All throughout the World was the conference's principal agenda item (Galguera, 2018).

Nevertheless, inclusive education is a hot topic currently being studied and debated in the field of education (Leijen et al., 2021), including in the Philippines. It has frequently been

*Corresponding author / Email: fabiolashannah.branzuela@deped.gov.ph
DOI: http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS05031369

Recommended citation:
Branzuela, F. S. T. (2026). The implementation of the special education program: The Loreto West District experience. Pantao (International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences) 5 (3), 1894-1909. http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS05031369

referred to as a new educational paradigm and as an educational reform objective to create inclusive societies as part of the global education for all agenda (Allam and Martin, 2021). Moreover, inclusive education embraces the philosophy of accepting all children regardless of race, size, shape, color, ability, or disability with support from school staff, students, parents, and the community (Baguisa and Ang-Manaig, 2019). Thus, the Department of Education, through the Special Education Program Implementation and the integration of Inclusive Education across the nation, has the primary purpose of providing appropriate learning for learners with special needs (Hayes and Bulat 2017). But despite all the initiatives provided, it is inevitable that learners with disabilities cannot fully access and participate in the K–12 Basic Education because of many obstacles and difficulties they face (Allam and Martin, 2021).

As a result, it is essential that the Department of Education modify its methods for identifying students with disabilities and provide learners with relevant and appropriate educational interventions (Arden et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the effectiveness of teachers has been acknowledged as one of the most crucial elements in the innovation and improvement of special education (Minghui et al., 2018). However, the inadequate population of Special Education teachers by profession is somehow undeniable in the community thus, to address this shortage, termed "Receiving Teachers," has emerged.

Receiving teachers are General Education teachers who receive pupils with disabilities from Special Education (SPED) self-contained classes in their regular classes (Surot, 2017). Despite being advocates for the program, General Education teachers who teach learners with special needs have little to no knowledge or background to teach them. Given the aforementioned situation in the Loreto West District, the researcher is encouraged to investigate the extent of Special Education Program Implementation through the proposed guidelines used to implement the said program.

Statement of the problem

The study investigated the extent of implementation of the Special Education Program among schools in Loreto West District, Division of Agusan del Sur.

In particular, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the receiving teachers in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, number of years in service as a teacher, related training attended, and typology of Learners with Disability (LWD) handled?
2. What is the extent of the implementation of the Special Education Program for Learners with Disability in terms of identification and referral process, assessment services, adaptation of the K to 12 curriculum for LWDs, educational placement, and program delivery?
3. Is there a significant association between the teachers' profile and the extent of implementation of the Special Education Program?
4. Based on the findings of the study, what training program for receiving teachers may be proposed?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational design. The use of descriptive correlation as an approach in this research provided a handful of information toward understanding how important the extent of implementation of special education in the education system is, which will best benefit the learners with disabilities.

This study was conducted at Loreto West District, Division of Agusan del Sur. It is located in the western part of the province of Agusan del Sur and comprises 16 schools. The Loreto West District is one of the farthest school districts in the entire Division of Agusan del Sur. Some of its composite schools can be reached by common transportation, but others can only be reached by crossing the river on a locally operated, lever-operated bamboo raft. Moreover, schools situated far from the road may be reached only by motorcycle, as the road is impassable to vehicles with four wheels or more. Somehow, the transportation in some areas is difficult, and many schools do not have access to the proper road.

The study involved 30 receiving teachers from the five identified road-accessible schools among the 12 elementary schools of Loreto West District, Division of Agusan del Sur, Municipality of Loreto, Province of Agusan del Sur. The total number of respondents selected was determined by purposive sampling. Of the five identified schools, Sto. Tomas Central Elementary School had a population of 26 receiving teachers, of whom 15 served as respondents; Guitas Elementary School had a population of 7, of whom 2 served as respondents; Magaud Elementary School had a population of 14, of whom 4 served as respondents; Waloe Elementary School had a population of 10, of whom 5 served as respondents; and Violanta Elementary School had a population of 6, of whom 4 served as respondents. In total, the five schools had a combined population of 63 receiving teachers, from whom 30 were selected as respondents of the study.

The questions used in the instrument for this study were constructed by the researcher. The research instrument was based on DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021, the Policy Guidelines on the Provision of Educational Programs and Services for Learners with Disabilities in the K to 12 Basic Education Program. The questionnaire used had been validated by three experts in Special Education Implementation. The research instrument has three parts. Part I dealt with the profile of the receiving teachers in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, years of service, and related training attended. Part II dealt with the Typology of Learners with Disabilities (LWD) as handled by the receiving teacher, a participant in the study. Part III is the survey questionnaire that was given to the respondents, measuring the extent of implementation of special education for learners with disabilities, along with the Identification and Referral Process, Assessment Services, Adaptation of the K to 12 Curriculum for LWDs, Educational Placement, and Program Delivery, each with 10 indicators.

Three experts in the Special Education Program validated the prepared research instrument. Its reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in an index of 90% for Identification and Referral Process, 82% for Assessment Services, 86% for Adaptation of the K to 12 Curriculum for LWDs, 81% for Educational Placement, and 89% for Program Delivery.

After the research proposal was approved and the questionnaires were validated by the experts, the researcher sent a formal letter requesting permission from the school heads of the following schools: Sto. Tomas Central Elementary School, Violanta Elementary School, Magaud Elementary School, Waloe Elementary School, and Guitas Elementary School, to conduct the survey in their respective schools. Upon approval of the request, the researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaires to the respondents, explained each item, and retrieved them after the respondents had completed answering. The data gathered were tallied and submitted for statistical treatment. After a week, the result of the statistical treatment was used to get the data for analysis. The researcher, with the adviser's guidance, analyzed the data for interpretation and drew conclusions based on the results. Some recommendations have also been formulated.

The gathered data were quantified using the following scale and scores to facilitate statistical analysis. For age, a range of 20 to 30 years old was given a score of 1, 31 to 40 years old a score of 2, 41 to 50 years old a score of 3, 51 to 60 years old a score of 4, and 61 years old onwards a score of 5. For sex, male was given a score of 1 and female a score of 2. For educational attainment, being a BEEd or Baccalaureate graduate was given a score of 1, interpreted as low; having Master's degree units and/or being a full-fledged graduate with other courses but with BEEd as a second degree course was given a score of 2, interpreted as average; graduated with other courses but with BEEd as a second degree course was given a score of 3, interpreted as above average; having doctoral units was given a score of 4, interpreted as high; and having a doctoral degree was given a score of 5, interpreted as very high. For number of years in service, 1 to 3 years was given a score of 1, 4 to 6 years a score of 2, 7 to 9 years a score of 3, and 10 or more years a score of 4. For trainings attended related to special education, 0 to 2 trainings attended was given a score of 1, 3 to 4 trainings attended a score of 2, and 5 or more trainings attended a score of 3.

For the typology of learners with disabilities being handled, a score of 0 indicated none and a score of 1 indicated present, across three categories. Category A, with intellectual disability, included cerebral palsy, autism spectrum, and Down syndrome. Category B, with learning disability, included dyslexia, described as difficulty in decoding words or reading disability; dysgraphia, described as difficulty in writing or fine motor skills; and dyscalculia, described as difficulty in performing mathematical operations. Category C covered others, referring to signs, characteristics, or behavior not manifested in either category A or category B.

For the extent of implementation, a scale value of 5, corresponding to a range of 4.5 to 5.0, carried the verbal description of very high and was interpreted as full implementation. A scale value of 4, corresponding to a range of 3.5 to 4.49, carried the verbal description of high and was interpreted as moderate implementation. A scale value of 3, corresponding to a range of 2.5 to 3.49, carried the verbal description of average and was interpreted as fair implementation. A scale value of 2, corresponding to a range of 1.5 to 2.49, carried the verbal description of low and was interpreted as poor implementation. A scale value of 1, corresponding to a range of 1.0 to 1.49, carried the verbal description of very low and was interpreted as very poor implementation.

The statistical tools used in this study were the weighted mean and frequency distribution, which were used for the descriptive analysis of the data gathered, and correlation analysis, which was applied to determine the relationship between the teachers' profiles and the extent of implementation of special education at Loreto West District schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and results of the study based on data gathered from 30 receiving teachers from five road accessible schools of Loreto West District, Division of Agusan del Sur, who were determined through purposive sampling in accordance with the descriptive correlational design earlier described. Data were gathered using a researcher constructed, expert validated three-part questionnaire addressing the teachers' profile, the typology of learners with disabilities handled, and the extent of implementation of special education along the Identification and Referral Process, Assessment Services, Adaptation of the K to 12 Curriculum for LWDs, Educational Placement, and Program Delivery, and were analyzed using weighted mean, frequency distribution, and correlation analysis. The discussion that follows is grounded entirely in the data gathered through this instrument, and the results are interpreted in direct relation to the study's objectives of describing the teachers'

ISSN 3028-0877 | e-ISSN 3155-6043 | DOI 10.69651/2022PIJHSS

profile, determining the extent of implementation of special education, and establishing the significant association between the teachers' profiles and that extent of implementation.

Profile of the receiving teachers

The profile of the participants in terms of sex, age, years in service, related trainings attended, educational attainment, and the typology of learners with disabilities handled reveals that most of the participants, f equals 24, are female, and that the majority belong to young adulthood, ages 18 to 35, f equals 17, followed by those in middle adulthood, ages 36 to 55, f equals 13. This stage of development implies that the majority of the participants are still in their baccalaureate educational attainment, f equals 19, and have served 4 to 6 years of teaching, f equals 11, and have therefore attended only a few training sessions, f equals 25, related to handling learners with disability. With respect to the typology of learners with disability handled by the receiving teachers, results indicate that the majority, f equals 12, are assigned to handle learners with special needs categorized as learning disabilities, namely dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. Some, f equals 5, handled a mix of learners who are dyslexic and those who have disability in writing abilities, such as difficulties with spelling or poor handwriting, that is, dysgraphia. Noticeable among the participants is the finding that there is one, f equals 1, receiving teacher who is handling five types of disability, namely autism, Down syndrome, and other forms of learning disability, it being understood that typologically, learners with disabilities are grouped into learning disability and intellectual disability, the latter exemplified by cerebral palsy and Down syndrome.

In summary, the participants' profile manifests the capabilities of individuals who are able to extend assistance to these learners with disability with an open mind and a commitment to accept and receive the responsibility of nurturing children with special needs. This is consistent with Erikson's psychosocial theory, which states that there is a set of underlying core capabilities that adults use to manage life, work, and parenting effectively, including but not limited to planning, focus, self-control, awareness, and flexibility. Hence, the receiving teachers are capable of handling learners with disability.

Extent of implementation of special education

The implementation of special education is processed and manifested through five phases, namely the Identification and Referral Process, Assessment Services, Adaptation of the K to 12 Curriculum for LWDs, Educational Placement, and Program Delivery, each assessed using ten indicators rated through a weighted mean and interpreted using the scale in which 1.0 to 1.49 is described as very low and interpreted as very poor implementation, 1.5 to 2.49 as low and poor implementation, 2.5 to 3.49 as average and fair implementation, 3.5 to 4.49 as high and moderate implementation, and 4.50 to 5.0 as very high and full implementation.

For the Identification and Referral Process, conducting the child find or child mapping activity obtained a weighted mean of 2.93, described as average and interpreted as fair implementation; collaboration with the LGU or barangay officials during early registration obtained 2.83, average, fair implementation; policy issued supporting the mechanism and procedures for child find or child mapping obtained 2.93, average, fair implementation; assessment tools that recognize learners who exhibit atypical needs as compared to their peers in the same chronological age obtained 2.67, average, fair implementation; appropriate interventions provided to learners with atypical needs during the identification process

obtained 2.60, average, fair implementation; services provided by the specialist from the health center, LGU, or other institutions with allied medical specialists such as psychologists and doctors for assessment obtained 2.43, described as low and interpreted as poor implementation; parent orientation towards assessment of their child obtained 2.90, average, fair implementation; assessment tools used to evaluate and assess learners with atypical needs, utilized by the appropriate specialist, obtained 2.53, average, fair implementation; orientation towards the conduct of assessment and evaluation tools used for learners with atypical needs obtained 2.67, average, fair implementation; and confidentiality of the information about learners being assessed obtained 3.53, described as high and interpreted as moderate implementation. The average weighted mean for this dimension is 2.80, described as average and interpreted as fair implementation.

These results indicate that confidentiality of the information about learners being assessed is high, with a weighted mean of 3.53, indicating moderate implementation, thus emphasizing the importance of privacy and confidentiality (Burke et al., 2018) regarding information about these learners being assessed. Moreover, there should be historical awareness and discriminative ability among practitioners regarding effective practices, and how the approach aligns with social justice and human rights (Francisco et al., 2020). Thus, as a receiving teacher, being aware of the correct strategy toward identifying learners with disabilities is crucial for providing the correct intervention and accommodation. On the other hand, services provided by the specialist from the health center, LGU, or other institutions that have an allied medical specialist such as a psychologist or doctor for assessment is low, with a weighted mean of 2.43, manifesting poor implementation, while all other indicators, that is, indicators 1 through 5 and 7 through 9, manifest fair implementation, with weighted means ranging from 2.53 to 2.90. The findings imply that there is a lack of support in terms of services provided by specialists from the health center, LGU, or other institutions with allied medical specialists such as psychologists and doctors for assessment. Furthermore, it was found that learners with special needs must have an accurate diagnosis that takes into account their level of disability or the type of disability they have (Kiyuba & Tukur, 2014), so that these learners' needs will be met and proper services given.

For Assessment Services, monitoring the learners' progress in all domains of development, namely the cognitive, socio emotional, physical, motor, and moral spiritual domains, obtained a weighted mean of 3.23, average, fair implementation; LWDs' access to psychological and multi-disciplinary assessments obtained 2.73, average, fair implementation; partnership with the Rural Health Unit, Municipal Social Welfare Department, and/or other government agencies in accessing specialists when needed obtained 2.57, average, fair implementation; access to a multi-disciplinary team such as pediatricians or medical doctors, nurses, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, behavioral therapists, developmental psychologists, and registered guidance counselors obtained 2.73, average, fair implementation; confidentiality in preparing the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) along with the assessment results obtained 2.83, average, fair implementation; teacher parent coordination in crafting the IEP for learners with special needs obtained 2.83, average, fair implementation; consistency of learners' assessment towards the curriculum obtained 2.53, average, fair implementation; modifications and accommodations provided to learners with disability towards demonstrating their learning obtained 2.70, average, fair implementation; descriptive ratings used to identify learners with severe to profound degree of disability to keep track of their progress obtained 2.77, average, fair implementation; and progress report forms used for learners with disability to keep track of their progress obtained 2.63, average, fair implementation. The average weighted mean for this dimension is 2.81, average, fair implementation.

ISSN 3028-0877 | e-ISSN 3155-6043 | DOI 10.69651/2022PIJHSS

All indicators in this dimension manifest an average extent of implementation, with weighted means ranging from 2.53 to 3.23, and although all fall into fair implementation, it is noticeable that the consistency of learners' assessment towards the curriculum reflects the lowest weighted mean of 2.53, implying that assessment of learners with disability is not always monitored. In reality, education assessment and resource centers are usually situated far from the areas where learners with special needs are located, according to Ohba and Malenya (2020), because local schools and settings lack sufficient financial and personnel resources, which makes integrating special education in schools more difficult and keeps inclusivity from becoming a reality. In addition, it is imperative that the connection between receiving teachers' instructional practices and student response be better understood, because receiving teachers outnumber qualified special education teachers (Mason et al., 2020), and there is no indication that this trend will reverse itself; in this sense, the present study serves as a first step in raising awareness of the connection between receiving teachers' instructional behavior and the learning behavior of the learners with special needs they are handling.

For the Adaptation of the K to 12 Curriculum for LWDs, educational opportunities offered by the K to 12 curriculum obtained a weighted mean of 3.13, average, fair implementation; receiving teachers' orientation towards the educational opportunities offered by the K to 12 curriculum for learners with disabilities obtained 2.90, average, fair implementation; available contextualized curriculum for learners with disabilities used by the receiving teachers obtained 2.80, average, fair implementation; essential adaptive curriculum orientation for receiving teachers obtained 2.73, average, fair implementation; available learning materials related to the implementation of the essential adaptive curriculum obtained 2.67, average, fair implementation; adaptation pedagogy implemented at school obtained 2.73, average, fair implementation; implementation of the modified In School Off School Approach as an alternative delivery mode for LWDs obtained 2.77, average, fair implementation; flexibility towards learning programs that cater to learners with special needs in terms of time obtained 3.0, average, fair implementation; transition programs and other related services that help learners with disabilities adjust to the curriculum obtained 2.87, average, fair implementation; and school leaders' and parents' engagement involving partner industries and businesses for the successful transition of learners with disabilities obtained 2.50, average, fair implementation. The average weighted mean for this dimension is 2.81, average, fair implementation.

All indicators manifest fair implementation, with an average weighted mean of 2.81, in the adaptation of the K to 12 curriculum. The K to 12 curriculum offers a variety of educational experiences centered on learners' interests, strengths, and needs, and developmentally appropriate for them; it must be learner centered, and the curriculum must be contextualized and adapted in the students' best interests. One of the goals of special education is to help all learners with disabilities become self-sufficient, meaningful, and contributing members of their families, communities, and society, according to Department of Education Order No. 22, s. 2020 (SPED). SPED works to develop the core knowledge and skills that learners with disabilities need in order to be mainstreamed into the general education system and eventually participate effectively in an ever-changing society (McLeskey, 2017). Depending on their particular needs and other criteria, learners with disabilities may or may not be included in the general education classroom; in order to effectively serve learners with special needs, the school shall offer a suitable educational setting (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017), and learners capable of managing required activities with the necessary instructional support within general education classes will be in full inclusion, spending the majority of their school days in general education classrooms with their average peers. From this research, some

authors have emphasized that rebuilding the general education system through an inclusive process can meet the educational needs of children with disabilities, in which case teachers become responsible for all students' education.

For Educational Placement, implementation of full inclusion in the general education classroom obtained a weighted mean of 2.93, average, fair implementation; accommodations provided to the K to 12 Basic Education curriculum for learners with disabilities obtained 2.80, average, fair implementation; available assistive devices and technologies and/or appropriate learning resources that support learners' needs and enable full participation in activities obtained 2.63, average, fair implementation; instructional strategies applied for the specific and additional needs of learners while learning with their typically developing peers obtained 2.70, average, fair implementation; readiness of teachers in the general education classes and of parents in accepting, recognizing, and respecting LWDs obtained 2.67, average, fair implementation; plans and lessons prepared for LWDs through collaboration between SPED and general education teachers obtained 2.67, average, fair implementation; adapted or modified K to 12 Basic Education curriculum based on the learning needs of LWDs obtained 2.73, average, fair implementation; prepared learning environment, including physical arrangement of the classroom and the readiness of typical learners and teachers in a general education classroom for the acceptance and respect of LWDs, obtained 2.80, average, fair implementation; the receiving teacher's handling of a self-contained class obtained 2.73, average, fair implementation; and school and community activities involving LWDs in a self-contained class alongside typically developing learners obtained 2.80, average, fair implementation. The average weighted mean for this dimension is 2.70, average, fair implementation.

Educational placement refers to an appropriate learning environment where the learner with disability is placed in areas such as mainstream and inclusive classes, resource room, self-contained class, or home or hospital settings, based on assessment results, and results here manifest fair implementation overall. In spite of DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, which stipulates the directive on inclusive education, Fuente (2022) reported that there are still barriers preventing children with impairments from accessing education, emphasizing the dearth of special education facilities, with 84% of municipalities lacking SPEd facilities, the difficulty students have in accessing them, inaccessible infrastructure, the shortage of qualified teachers and specialists, inadequate screening procedures, and the lack of comprehensive support for children with disabilities. In addition, according to the results of Malik's 2017 study, scaffolding was seen as transitory, assisted learning aimed at increasing the student's independence, creating a dynamic system between the instructor and the student, in which the learner gradually develops competence in the assignment or subject at hand with the aid of this technique (Lajoie, 2005). In connection with this, the lowest weighted mean among the indicators, 2.63, denotes fair implementation of the availability of assistive devices and technologies and/or appropriate learning resources that support learners' needs and enable full participation, while all other indicators are likewise found to be fairly implemented.

For Program Delivery, initiated, designed, and implemented programs for LWDs obtained a weighted mean of 2.7, average, fair implementation; implementation of rules and regulations related to the Anti Bullying Act of 2013 obtained 3.0, average, fair implementation; programs implemented to protect LWDs against child abuse and other forms of violence obtained 2.93, average, fair implementation; instructions within the school setting received by learners with special needs obtained 2.70, average, fair implementation; receiving teachers' knowledge towards strategic program delivery for learners with special needs obtained 2.87, average, fair implementation; technical assistance provided to general education teachers and other school personnel concerned with designing and conducting remedial classes and/or co teaching and team teaching obtained 2.63, average, fair

implementation; modified learning resources appropriate for their needs provided to LWDs obtained 2.8, average, fair implementation; promoting inclusion of LWDs with mild to moderate disability in the regular classroom or mainstreamed classes obtained 2.67, average, fair implementation; monitoring of physical facilities' compliance with BP 344, the Accessible Law, obtained 2.37, described as low and interpreted as poor implementation; and collaboration of the receiving teacher with family members and/or trained volunteers in teaching LWDs obtained 2.70, average, fair implementation. The average weighted mean for this dimension is 2.73, average, fair implementation.

Indicator 9, the monitoring of physical facilities' compliance with BP 344, with a weighted mean of 2.37, is described as low and shows poor implementation, while all other indicators, with weighted means ranging from 2.63 to 3.0, are verbally described as average, manifesting fair implementation. According to the Theory of Situated Learning, developed in the early 1990s by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, students are more likely to learn if they actively participate in the educational process, and to effectively serve learners with special needs, the school shall provide a suitable educational setting (Zigmond & Kloo, 2017); however, overall, it can be deduced that the delivery of special education for LWDs is not carried out effectively enough to meet the needs of children with special needs. It can also be seen in the results that the monitoring of physical facilities' compliance with BP 344, the Accessible Law, shows poor implementation. Schools must offer LWDs the Special Education Program through a variety of delivery methods or options, with the delivery of teaching depending on the student's distance from residence to school, family structure, health status, and/or other variables that the school administration will decide upon; instruction for students with special needs may take place in a classroom, handled by a special education teacher or a general education teacher (Hehir, 2016). One of a teacher's tasks is selecting appropriate learning strategies, and to expect something positive in the teaching learning output, a teacher must know how to select the appropriate instructional materials and strategies, considering the class as well as the individual pupil's subject matter (Macud, 2003). Despite DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, on inclusive education, Fuente (2022) again notes that there remain barriers preventing children with disabilities from entering education, including the lack of SPEd facilities, with 84% of municipalities lacking them, difficulty accessing such facilities, inaccessible infrastructure, the shortage of qualified teachers and specialists, inadequate screening procedures, and the lack of comprehensive support for children with disabilities. Yet, research by Allam and Martin (2021) in the City Division of Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines, found that teachers working with pupils with learning difficulties felt unqualified because they had not received any special education training from the school, and as a result, general education teachers who also taught special education classes were not fully equipped to work with children who had disabilities. In summary, the overall implementation of special education across all five dimensions indicates fair implementation.

Association between the teachers' profiles and the extent of implementation

The relationship between the teachers' profiles and the extent of special education implementation was examined through correlation analysis, using r to denote the correlation coefficient and p to denote the significance value, with decisions rendered at the 0.05 level of significance for N equals 30, where D1 denotes reject Ho and D2 denotes fails to reject Ho. For the Identification and Referral Process, age yielded r equals .469 with p equals .009, decision D1, reject Ho; gender yielded r equals .171 with p equals .367, decision D2; educational attainment yielded r equals .129 with p equals .498, decision D2; years in service

yielded r equals .156 with p equals .411, decision D2; related training yielded r equals .240 with p equals .201, decision D2; and handled LWD yielded r equals .043 with p equals .821, decision D2. For Assessment Services, age yielded r equals .015 with p equals .938, decision D2; gender yielded r equals .143 with p equals .451, decision D2; educational attainment yielded r equals .061 with p equals .750, decision D2; years in service yielded r equals .002 with p equals .990, decision D2; related training yielded r equals .025 with p equals .897, decision D2; and handled LWD yielded r equals .082 with p equals .667, decision D2. For Adaptation, age yielded r equals .007 with p equals .971, decision D2; gender yielded r equals .194 with p equals .304, decision D2; educational attainment yielded r equals .022 with p equals .908, decision D2; years in service yielded r equals .198 with p equals .294, decision D2; related training yielded r equals .322 with p equals .083, decision D2; and handled LWD yielded r equals .083 with p equals .664, decision D2. For Placement, age yielded r equals .105 with p equals .579, decision D2; gender yielded r equals .032 with p equals .865, decision D2; educational attainment yielded r equals .311 with p equals .094, decision D2; years in service yielded r equals .094 with p equals .620, decision D2; related training yielded r equals .116 with p equals .543, decision D2; and handled LWD yielded r equals .090 with p equals .678, decision D2. For Delivery, age yielded r equals .002 with p equals .992, decision D2; gender yielded r equals .051 with p equals .788, decision D2; educational attainment yielded r equals .173 with p equals .360, decision D2; years in service yielded r equals .257 with p equals .171, decision D2; related training yielded r equals .193 with p equals .306, decision D2; and handled LWD yielded r equals .162 with p equals .394, decision D2.

These results show that, among the teachers' profiles, age positively associates with the extent of implementation in terms of referral, r equals .469, p equals .009, which is below the 0.05 level of significance; hence, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant association between teachers' profiles and the extent of special education implementation, is rejected at the 0.05 level of significance set for this analysis, specifically for age in relation to the Identification and Referral Process. All other pairings across assessment, adaptation, placement, and delivery show significance values greater than the 0.05 level of significance, and for these the null hypothesis is not rejected. However, further correlation analysis revealed a moderate correlation with the disability handled by the teachers in terms of teachers' age, r equals .394, p equals .031, and their training, r equals .552, p equals .002, both of which fall below the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the older the teacher is and the more training he or she has undergone, the better the teacher's association with learners with disabilities.

In support of these findings, Podolsky et al. (2019) reported that teaching experience is positively associated with student achievement gains throughout much of a teacher's career, that as teachers gain experience their students are more likely to perform better on measures of success beyond test scores, that teachers make greater gains in effectiveness when they teach in a supportive, collegial environment or accumulate experience in the same grade, subject, or district, and that more experienced teachers confer benefits to their colleagues. In addition, a study conducted by Burhaein et al. (2020) on the significant effect of job tenure on special needs teacher performance found that longer job tenure indicates that the teacher is more experienced in teaching, that job tenure represents an employee's work experience, knowledge, and skills, that employee loyalty at work can be reflected by the number of years of service, and that consequently the length of employment broadens one's experience with challenges and achievements, with the length of the teacher's employment correlating with the length of classroom instruction; therefore, receiving teachers will see improved student achievement in learning objectives as they gain more experience. Moreover, it was found that teacher certification has a significant effect on special needs teachers' performance (Burhaein et al., 2020), as a certificate demonstrating a particular level of competence in delivering

ISSN 3028-0877 | e-ISSN 3155-6043 | DOI 10.69651/2022PIJHSS

educational services to the community can provide assurance of a person's professional standing as a teacher; this implies that receiving teachers tend to gain more confidence in teaching learners with special needs when they have been capacitated with the necessary training that best fits their learners.

Proposed training program and action plan

In relation to the findings of the study, it is evident that special education has been implemented only to a limited extent across participating schools. It was noted that teachers who were confident in their support networks and had sufficient access to educational resources were more positive towards inclusion than other teachers (Saloviita, 2020). However, it is undeniable that receiving teachers are outnumbered by certified special education teachers (Mason et al., 2020); thus, handling students with special needs becomes a challenge for general education teachers, who lack prior knowledge of handling such students. Working on training programs must therefore be a priority in attaining teacher efficacy and effectiveness in handling learners with special needs. As recommended by Kirby (2017), accurate assessment, effective teacher preparation, and increasing use of evidence-based instruction are all necessary to identify the techniques for achieving full inclusion for children with learning difficulties, and using these strategies could enhance the provision of special education services to learners with learning disabilities.

Based on these findings, an action plan for the institutionalization of special education was crafted by the researcher, structured into three phases. Phase I, the Orientation phase, aims to emphasize the value of special education and covers advocacy orientation, child mapping, and training workshops conducted through divisional or regional training, all scheduled all year round, and involves the school head, teachers, resource speakers, parents, and pupils as persons involved, with resources including a laptop, television, and sound system, and with a success indicator that 90% of the stakeholders will be well informed about the program. This phase also includes conducting stakeholders' orientation and advocacy on SPED, the collection of the demographic profile of registered individuals with disabilities from the barangay, and, as an objective, conducting an orientation on child mapping in partnership with the BLGU, using strategies such as lecture, workshop, video presentation, and group activity, so as to intensify and improve teachers' abilities to teach students with exceptional needs, with the persons involved, resources, and success indicators as previously stated, and using the child mapping form and the resulting list of enlisted individuals with disabilities as supporting resources.

Phase II, the Conduct phase, pertains to the actual implementation of the Special Education Program and is scheduled all year round, involving the school head and all teachers, using a laptop, television, attendance sheet, and bond paper as resources, with a success indicator that 100% of the teachers attended the training workshop. This includes conducting a school-based roll out on SPED and inclusive education and joining the divisional or regional training. Phase III, the Enrichment phase, is directed at cultivating teachers' experience toward the Special Education Program and is likewise scheduled all year round, involving the school head and teachers, with resources including travel allowance, meals, and snacks, and with a success indicator that 100% of the identified teachers who joined have successfully completed the training.

Taken together, these findings show that the 30 receiving teachers of Loreto West District are predominantly young to middle aged, baccalaureate degree holding females with 4 to 6 years of teaching experience and limited exposure to special education related training,

and that the extent of implementation of special education across all five dimensions, namely Identification and Referral Process at 2.80, Assessment Services at 2.81, Adaptation of the K to 12 Curriculum for LWDs at 2.81, Educational Placement at 2.70, and Program Delivery at 2.73, consistently falls within the average, fair implementation range, with confidentiality of assessment information as the single indicator reaching high, moderate implementation at 3.53, and with specialist service access under referral at 2.43 and physical facility compliance with BP 344 under delivery at 2.37 standing out as the weakest, poor implementation indicators. The correlational analysis further demonstrates that, of the teacher profile variables tested, only age is significantly associated with the extent of implementation, and specifically only with the Identification and Referral Process, r equals .469, p equals .009, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis for that pairing alone, while all other profile to implementation pairings across assessment, adaptation, placement, and delivery yielded p values above .05 and failure to reject the null hypothesis, alongside a separate moderate association between the disability typology handled and both teachers' age, r equals .394, p equals .031, and training, r equals .552, p equals .002. Collectively, these results directly address the study's objectives by describing the teachers' profile, quantifying the fair but not yet moderate or high extent of special education implementation across all five program dimensions, and empirically establishing that experience and training, rather than gender, educational attainment, or years in service broadly construed, are the profile factors most closely tied to effective engagement with learners with disabilities. These findings contribute to the field by reinforcing, within the distinct geographic and logistical constraints of Loreto West District, that teacher experience and targeted training are central levers for strengthening special education service delivery in contexts where certified SPED specialists remain scarce, and they provide the empirical basis for the proposed three phase training program, comprising the Orientation, Conduct, and Enrichment phases, that is intended to institutionalize special education practice among receiving teachers and that will be elaborated further in the succeeding chapter.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to investigate the extent of special education implementation among 12 elementary schools in Loreto West District, Division of Agusan del Sur, during the school year 2022-2023. It sought to determine the profile of the receiving teachers in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, number of years in service as a teacher, related training attended, and typology of learners with disabilities handled; to assess the extent to which special education for learners with disabilities has been implemented along the identification and referral process, assessment services, adaptation of the K to 12 curriculum for LWDs, educational placement, and program delivery; to determine whether a significant association exists between the teachers' profile and the extent of implementation of special education; and, based on these findings, to propose enhancement programs for receiving teachers. To this end, the study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design, with a survey questionnaire administered to 30 receiving teachers who were selected through purposive sampling because they handled learners with disabilities, and the data gathered were treated using frequency and percentage distributions, weighted mean, and correlation analysis.

The findings reveal that many of the receiving female teachers were young and middle-aged adults with three years or more of teaching experience, that many of them were at the baccalaureate level of educational attainment, and that most had only 0 to 2 instances of related training. Most of the receiving teachers were assigned to handle learners with special needs categorized as learning disabilities, namely dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, and it was likewise noticeable that one of the receiving teachers was handling five types of disability,

namely autism, Down syndrome, and other forms of learning disability. Building on this profile, the results further showed that there was only a fair implementation of special education in the West District of Loreto, Agusan del Sur, and correlation analysis indicated that age is positively associated with the extent of implementation in terms of referral ($r = .469$, $p = .009$). Further correlation analysis revealed a moderate association between the disability handled by the teachers and both the age of the teachers and their training, suggesting that these two profile factors bear a meaningful relationship to how well teachers engage with the learners with disabilities under their care. Taken together, these findings indicate that the Special Education program has been implemented only to a limited extent among participating schools, underscoring that working on receiving teachers' knowledge through training programs must be a priority in attaining teacher efficacy and effectiveness in handling learners with special needs. As recommended by Kirby (2017), accurate assessment, effective teacher preparation, and increasing use of evidence-based instruction are all necessary to identify the techniques for achieving full inclusion for learners with learning disabilities, and employing these strategies could enhance the provision of special education services to this population.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the older the teacher is and the more training he or she has undergone, the better the teacher's association with learners with disabilities, indicating that experience and continuing professional development jointly strengthen a teacher's capacity to respond appropriately to learners' needs. It can likewise be concluded that the implementation of Special Education needs close monitoring and direct supervision, since the prevailing fair level of implementation across the identification and referral process, assessment services, curriculum adaptation, educational placement, and program delivery suggests that gains achieved thus far have not yet become fully institutionalized. Finally, it can be concluded that the collaborative effort of stakeholders strengthens the implementation of the Special Education Program, affirming that the active and coordinated participation of teachers, school heads, parents, and the community is indispensable to sustaining and advancing the program.

In light of these conclusions, it is recommended that general education teachers handling learners with disabilities be provided with more relevant training and seminars to gain knowledge toward the correct implementation and application of the program, so that they may be able to give proper intervention and accommodation to the learners with disabilities they handle. It is further recommended that guidebooks be provided for receiving teachers to serve as their basis for determining what intervention would be appropriate for the learner being handled, and that an accessible Individual Learning Resource Center be established to address the challenge of providing proper assessment to learners with disabilities. Finally, it is recommended that school heads and supervisors maintain constant monitoring, coaching, and evaluation of the implementation of intervention strategies, so as to foster the full implementation of Special Education and thereby cultivate a more firmly established, child-friendly, and inclusive learning environment.

REFERENCES

Margolis, A. A. (2020). Zone of proximal development, scaffolding and practice. Kul′turno-Istoričeskaâ Psihologiâ, 16(3). https://doi.org/10.17759/chp.2020160303

Pascual, A. E. (2021). Individual education planning (IEP): Equipping teachers in addressing learners' diversity. International Journal of Research Publications, 87(1). https://doi.org/10.47119/ijrp1008711020212349

Ainscow, M. (2020). Promoting inclusion and equity in education: Lessons from international experiences. Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 6(1), 7-16.

Akçin, F. N. (2022). Identification of the processes of preparing individualized education programs (IEP) by special education teachers, and of problems encountered therein. Educational Research and Reviews, 17(1), 31-45.

Aldousari, A. L., & Dunn, M. (2022). Special education for students with learning disabilities in Saudi Arabia: Reality and challenges. Learning Disabilities: A Contemporary Journal, 20(2), 175-197.

Leijen, Ä., Arcidiacono, F., & Baucal, A. (2021). The dilemma of inclusive education: Inclusion for some or inclusion for all. Frontiers in Psychology, 12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.633066

Al-Shammari, Z., & Hornby, G. (2020). Special education teachers' knowledge and experience of IEPs in the education of students with special educational needs. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 67(2), 167-181.

Ilmiani, A. M., Wahdah, N., & Mubarak, M. R. (2021). The application of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory: A process in learning speaking skill. Ta'lim al-'arabiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab Dan Kebahasaaraban, 5(2). https://doi.org/10.15575/jpba.v5i2.12945

Baguisa, L. R., & Ang-Manaig, K. (2019). Knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers on inclusive education and academic performance of children with special needs. International Journal of Social Sciences, 4(3), 1409-1425.

Brock, M. E., & Carter, E. W. (2017). A meta-analysis of educator training to improve implementation of interventions for students with disabilities. Remedial and Special Education, 38(3), 131-144.

Burke, M. M., Meadan-Kaplansky, H., Patton, K. A., Pearson, J. N., Cummings, K. P., & Lee, C. E. (2018). Advocacy for children with social-communication needs: Perspectives from parents and school professionals. The Journal of Special Education, 51(4), 191-200.

Phytanza, D. T. P., & Burhaein, E. (2020). The effects of tenure, teacher certification, and work motivation on special needs teacher performance. Universal Journal of Educational Research, 8(9), 4348-4356. https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080962

Alghazo, E. M., & Alkhazaleh, M. S. (2021). Collaboration between special education teachers and regular education teachers: Implications for professional development. International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education. https://doi.org/10.9756/int-jecse/v13i1.211005

Ewing, D. L., Monsen, J. J., & Kielblock, S. (2018). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education: A critical review of published questionnaires. Educational Psychology in Practice, 34(2), 150-165.

Fabregat, H., Martínez-Romo, J., & Araujo, L. (2020). Understanding and improving disability identification in medical documents. IEEE Access, 8, 155399-155408. https://doi.org/10.1109/access.2020.3019178

Ejue, J. B., & Orim, O. S. (2018). Neurological assessment and education of learners with specific learning disabilities in Nigeria. E-Pedagogium, 18, 99-106. https://doi.org/10.5507/epd.2018.049

Rens, J., & Louw, H. (2021). Teachers' experiences in the implementation of the life skills CAPS for learners with severe intellectual disability. Educational Research for Social Change, 10(2), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2021/v10i2a7

Zhao, K., Lu, J., & Xue, G. (2020). Research on statistics teaching reform based on teachers' attitude. 15-17. https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200401.005

Kini, T., & Podolsky, A. (2016). Does teaching experience increase teacher effectiveness? A review of the research. Learning Policy Institute.

Kirby, M. (2017, April). Implicit assumptions in special education policy: Promoting full inclusion for students with learning disabilities. In Child & Youth Care Forum (Vol. 46, pp. 175-191). Springer US.

Lee, Y. S. (2019). General theory of law and development: An overview. Law and Development Review, 12(2), 351-375.

Leijen, Ä., Arcidiacono, F., & Baucal, A. (2021). The dilemma of inclusive education: Inclusion for some or inclusion for all. Frontiers in Psychology, 12, 633066.

Lemons, C. J., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Kearns, D. M., & Sinclair, A. C. (2018). Envisioning an improved continuum of special education services for students with learning disabilities: Considering intervention intensity. Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 33(3), 131-143.

Llego, M. A. (2022, August 25). Inclusive education in the Philippines. TeacherPH. Retrieved August 25, 2022

Asis, L. C. (2020). Employability of senior high school graduates under TECHVOC track with national certification in graphics and animation from TESDA. The Education Review, USA, 4, 219-224. https://doi.org/10.26855/er.2020.12.002

Francisco, M. P. B., Hartman, M. C., & Wang, Y. (2020). Inclusion and special education. Education Sciences, 10(9), 238. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10090238

Mosbiran, N. F., Mustafa, M. Z., Nordin, M. N., Ismail, A. F., Feisal, M., Akim, T., & Saimy, I. S. (2021). Analysis of the study of individual education plans in special education. Review of International Geographical Education Online, 11(7).

Mugambi, M. M. (2017). Approaches to inclusive education and implications for curriculum theory and practice. International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education, 10(4), 92-106.

Pandey, N. (2020). Inclusive education. Techno Learn: An International Journal of Educational Technology, 10(2). https://doi.org/10.30954/2231-4105.02.2020.8

Nepo, K. (2017, April). The use of technology to improve education. In Child & Youth Care Forum (Vol. 46, pp. 207-221). Springer US.

Saffar, O. A. (2019). Using the pragmatic approach with special education and universal design for learning (UDL). Journal of Education and Practice. https://doi.org/10.7176/jep/10-35-16

Kelly, O., Buckley, K., Lieberman, L. J., & Arndt, K. (2022). Universal design for learning - A framework for inclusion in outdoor learning. Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42322-022-00096-z

Qu, X. (2022). A critical realist model of inclusive education for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. International Journal of Inclusive Education, 26(10), 1008-1022.

Rokowski, E. G. (2020). Understanding the complexities of the IEP goal writing process: A case study of special education teachers (Doctoral dissertation, Northeastern University).

Dewi, S. S., Dalimunthe, H. A., & Faadhil. (2018). The effectiveness of universal design for learning. Journal of Social Science Studies. https://doi.org/10.5296/jsss.v6i1.14042

Saloviita, T. (2020). Teacher attitudes towards the inclusion of students with support needs. Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs, 20(1), 64-73.

Sanderson, K. A., & Goldman, S. E. (2022). Understanding the characteristics and predictors of student involvement in IEP meetings. The Journal of Special Education, 56(1), 3-13.

Sanderson, K. A., & Goldman, S. E. (2022). Understanding the characteristics and predictors of student involvement in IEP meetings. The Journal of Special Education, 56(1), 3-13.

Pimentel, S. F. (2020). Improved access and participation for persons with disabilities in local governance. Policy and Governance Review, 4(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.30589/pgr.v4i1.278

Zigmond, N. P., & Kloo, A. (2017). General and special education are (and should be) different. In Handbook of special education (pp. 249-261). Routledge.